THE SOVLES Looking-glasse,

Lively representing its Estate before God:

with

A Treatise Of *Conscience*;

wherein the definitions and distinctions thereof are unfolded, and severall Cases resolved:

By that reverend and faithfull Minister of the Word, WILLIAM FENNER, B.D. sometimes Fellow of *Pembroke-hall* in *Cambridge*, and late of *Rochford* in *Essex*.

Finished by Himselfe.

ACTS 24. 16.

I exercise my selfe to have alwayes a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.

CAMBRIDGE:
Printed by *Roger Daniel*, Printer to the Vniversity; for *John Rothwell* at the *Sunne* in Pauls church-yard. 1640.

SOUL'S

Looking glaſs,

Lively repreſenting its

Eſſay

unto

A Treatiſe Of Converſe

wherein the definition and distinc-
tions thereof are unfolded,
and ſeveral Cases reſolved.

By that reverend and learned Minister of the
Word WILLIAM PENN, B.D. ſome-
times Fellow of Emanuel-Colledge in Cambridge,
and Rector of Lavington.

Printed by Thurſtle.

Acts 24. 16.

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To the Christian Reader.

IT was the saying of Solon, That there were many good laws made, but there wanted one law to make us put all those laws in execution: The like may be said concerning the books that are written now a dayes, There are many good books written, but there wanteth one book to make us to put those good books in practice. Such a book were worth writing, and worth reading. And

Ille verè Scripturas legit qui verba vertit in opera.

I know no reaſon but that this book (if the Spirit of God write it in our hearts) may have this happie effect: For it is a book that will teach us how to get into the State of grace, and how to get and keep a good Conſcience. And whoſoever readeth a book with a good conſcience will make conſcience to practice what he readeth: For a good conſcience is, as Ariſtotle ſaith of Juſtice, * *a Synopſis and Epitome of all virtues: It is a* * *Panacea to cure all ſoul-diſeaſes: It is* * *a medicine to digeſt all book-ſurfetting.*

* Ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ συλλήβδην πᾶσ' ἀρετή ἐστι.

* Διὰ τὸ πάντα ἀνεῖν, ἀ ſanandis omnibus morbis.

* πανάκειον φάρμακον.

There

*There are foure ſorts of Conſciences: Some bad and unquiet, ſome bad and quiet, ſome good and unquiet, ſome good and quiet. For a conſcience to be bad and quiet is the worſt temper that can be: Better have a bad unquiet then a bad and quiet conſcience: better have a tormenting Tophet in the ſoul then a fools paradiſe: The beſt frame of Conſcience is the good and quiet conſcience: This is a * Paradiſe upon earth, * a preguſtation and prelibation of heaven, * a manſion for the Trinitie to dwell in.*

* Lætitia bonæ conſcientiæ paradiſus eſt animarum, gaudium angelorum, hortus deliciarum, ager benedictionis, templum Solomonis, aula Dei, habitaculum Spiritûs ſancti, Bernard.

* προπομπὸς ἐυαρῦ.

Now this ensuing treatise will teach us how to purchase this precious jewel of a good and quiet conscience. A treatise very necessary in these unconscionable dayes, wherein most people make no conscience to sinne against conscience; and some have sinned so long against conscience as that they have lost all conscience of sinne. As S. Augustine saith of the name of a Christian, so may I say of conscience, Multi conscientiam habent, non ad remedium sed ad judicium, Many have a conscience for their condemnation

* Multi Christianum nomen ad judicium habent non ad remedium.

condemnation and not for their salvation. Conscience * it is the house of the soul: But this house lieth waste and is much ruinated and decayed in these times, wherein * never more science but never lesse conscience. Conscience * it is a private judgement-day before the publick day of judgement: And it is an ill presage that most people will never stand upright in the court of heaven, because they stand accused and condemned in the court of conscience. Conscience is Gods preacher in our bosomes: And it

* Domus animæ, Guil. Parisiens.

* Dum tempora superiora cum nostris comparo, dicere consuevi plus illos conscientiæ, scientiæ minus habuisse; nos contrà, scientiæ plus, conscientiæ minus habere, Beza.

* Præjudicium judicii, Tertull.

is a most certain rule; That that man that will not regard the preacher in his bosome will never regard the preacher in the pulpit. And the reason why the preacher in the pulpit doth no more good, is because the preacher in the bosome is so much despised and neglected. And therefore I doubt not but this book (these motives considered) will be very acceptable to all those that have or desire to have a good and quiet conscience. For as * *S. Bernard most excellently saith,* Every mans conscience is his book; and

* *Unicuiq; liber est propria conscientia; & ad hunc librum discendum & emendandum omnes alii inventi sunt.*

all

to the Reader,

all books are written to discover and amend the errours of the book of conscience. *Let those that reade this book of conscience look into the book of their own conscience, and amend all the faults of that book by this book.*

The Reverend Authour of this book was a Minister very conscientious, and one that had a great abilitie given him by God to preach unto and work upon the consciences of people, to awaken the sleepie conscience, to inform the erroneous conscience, to settle the doubtfull

full conscience, and to comfort the wounded conscience: his sermons were all dipt in conscience: And therefore a subject of Conscience must needs be welcome from such a preacher. It is true that this birth is Posthumum opus, *and cometh out after the death of the Authour: But I hope it will be the more pleasing, to revive the memory of him whose life and labours were deservedly pretious in the esteem of Gods people. And if conscience, though for a while blind, and dumbe, and seared, and put out of all office, will notwithstanding*

withstanding at last be put into office, and made to see, speak and feel to the utter destruction of an impenitent sinner; why may not a discourse of Conscience, though long ago preached, be suffered to revive and live for the salvation of those that shall have grace to reade it aright? especially considering that these sermons were perfected by himself in his lifetime?

Much I could say in commendation of this worthie Divine, both in regard of his unwearisome pains in preaching, consuming

Praelucendo pereo. consuming his own bodie to save the souls of others, as also of his learning and exemplarie pietie: but I forbear. All that I will say is this; They that fully knew him did love and reverence him: and if any did disesteem him, it was because they did not fully know him. He is now a shining starre in the firmament of heaven. And there are hundreds of people that will blesse God to all eternity for his pains. He needeth not our praises, but our imitation.

All that I desire from you that reade this short treatise is this;

*this; That ye would either get a good conscience by the reading of this book, or bring a good conscence to the reading of it. Labour to make an addition to the heavenly ioyes of this faithfull servant of God by making this book a means to bring thy soul to those heavenly joyes which are at Gods right hand for evermore: which are joyes unspeakeable and glorious, so great that, * as S. Augustine saith,* If one drop of the joyes of heaven should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the bitterneſſe

* Tanta est dulcedo cœlestis gaudii, ut si una guttula difflueret in infernum, totam amaritudinem inferni absorberet.

terneſſe of Hell. *And that God would make you heirs of this joy, is the prayer*

of your ſoul-friend

Edm. Calamy.

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An Enquiry after a mans estate before God.

COLOSS. 4. 8.

Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he may know your estate and comfort your hearts.

THE estate of a man before God is the relation that he standeth in unto God, as God is the free fountain of all spirituall life and salvation, and the determiner of mens everlasting conditions either in heaven or hell: So that when we question about a mans estate, we question, Whether he be in Christ or not; Whether he have true grace, yea or no; Whether he be one of Gods children or no, or whether he be yet no better then a reprobate. What a mans estate before God is.

There be three things to be consi-

dered in this definition of every mans eſtate. Firſt, it is *a relation unto God*; not as a man is in himſelf, it may be rich, it may be poore in the world; but I ſpeak here as he is in relation towards God, Whether he be rich towards God, yea or no. I do not ſpeak as a man is in regard of others; it may be he is a father or a ſonne, a maſter or a ſervant, a king or a ſubject: but in relation to God, Whether Gods ſervant or no, Gods child or no. *Salute* *Rom.* 16. 10. *Apelles*, ſaith Paul; and he telleth us in what eſtate Apelles was in before God, namely, in an eſtate of approbation, *approved in Chriſt*. And the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaketh on the contrary of the unconverted Gentiles, that they were *ſtrangers from the life of God*, Epheſ. 4. 18. *Epheſ.* 4. 18. Secondly, As it is a relation unto God, ſo it is a *ſtanding* relation: That wherein he ſtandeth towards God, that is a mans eſtate before God. There is a difference between one that doth ſin and one that is in the ſtate of ſin: A child of God may ſinne, but he is not in a ſtate of ſinne; you cannot call him a wicked

a wicked man. So also there is difference between one that doeth some good actions and one that is in a good estate: A carnall man may do some good things, but he is not in a good estate. The estate of a man is a standing thing, it is the relation that he standeth in towards God. Thirdly, It is the relation that a man standeth in towards God *as he is the free fountain of spirituall life and salvation.* It is not every standing relation towards God: For a man may be considered in relation to God as a Creatour, and so the heavens and the earth and the very brute beasts stand in relation to God as they are his creatures; but they have not this estate that we speak of, which is a relation to God as the free giver of spirituall life and salvation (He is free, he may choose whether he will give it or no.) Now this is a mans estate, the relation he standeth in unto God, Whether the Lord hath given him his saving grace, yea or no; spirituall life in Christ Jesus, yea or no; title to heaven and salvation, yea or no: this is the meaning when

we ſpeak of a mans eſtate. It is ſaid of
Gen. 13. 13. Sodom, *They were ſinners before God*: that is, they were in a bad eſtate, a ſtate of ſinne. It is ſaid of Zachary and
Luke 1. 6. Eliſabeth, *They were both righteous before God*; that is, they were both in a very good ſtate.

Obſerv. Miniſters are to enquire after the eſtate of their people. All Chriſtians believe that there is a God: It behoveth every one now to conſider in what eſtate he ſtandeth to this God. This is a great queſtion that we which are miniſters ought to demand of our people, to know their eſtates.

Reaſons 1. Firſt, becauſe we are ſhepherds, and are bound to look well how it ſtandeth with our flock. If we do not labour to know your eſtates, we can never look well to your ſouls. Conſider that place
Prov. 27. 23. in the Proverbs, *Be diligent to know the ſtate of thy flock, and look well to thy herds.* Where the wiſe man firſt requireth that we ſhould look well to our flocks, and then directeth us in the manner how, *viz.* by being diligent to know their eſtate how it ſtandeth with them.

2. Secondly, we are Gods labourers;

and

and we muſt know in what eſtate our work ſtandeth: elſe we may labour and labour and all in vain; we may preach and exhort and call upon our people to heare and to believe and obey, and all this may ſtill be in vain, if we do not enquire in what eſtate they are. This is the reaſon why Paul could not forbear ſending and enquiring how it ſtood with the Theſſalonians, in what eſtate they were in, how it went with their faith, whether they kept it or no, leſt the tempter had tempted them, and his labour ſhould have been in vain; for ſo it had been for all his preaching and teaching them if they had not been in a good eſtate: therefore he ſent to know. *1. Theſſ. 3. 5.*

Thirdly, we are to take the care and the charge of your ſouls: Now then how can we be quiet if we do not know in what eſtate your ſouls be? A good father cannot be at quiet if he do not know how it is with his children: How if they ſhould be ſick? how if undone? Oh it would comfort a good father to know his children to be in good caſe: But if it were otherwiſe *3.*

with them, though it would grieve him much, yet he had rather know it then not; for if he know it he can better tell what to do. So it was with the Apoſtle; his very bowels yerned upon the Philippians, *Oh my poore people,* thought he, *I wonder what eſtate they be in. How if they totter? how if they miſcarry? how if the devil have tempted them to ſinne and to apoſtatize? how if they be in trouble of conſcience?* He could never be at quiet till he knew their eſtate: *I truſt in the Lord Jeſus,* ſaith he, *to ſend Timotheus ſhortly unto you, that I alſo may be of good comfort when I know your eſtate.* He had a great care of their ſouls, and therefore it would comfort his heart to know what eſtate they were in.

Philip. 2. 19.

4. Fourthly, we are teachers, and therefore we muſt know the eſtate of our people: otherwiſe we are ignorant what doctrine to provide for them, what points to handle among them. Paul in this epiſtle to the Coloſſians, knowing onely their eſtate in the generall, delivereth abundance of generall precepts

precepts and exhortations unto them; he describeth unto them the mystery of Christ, admonisheth them to continue stedfast therein, to embrace the preaching of the word, to beware of philosophy and the vain traditions and sophistry of men, to take heed of doting upon ceremonies, which are all ended in Christ, to set their affections on heaven, to mortifie the deeds of the flesh, to put off the old man; he warneth them to be loving and humble: he biddeth wives do their duties to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives; children to obey their parents, and parents to encourage their children; servants to obey their masters, and masters to deal well with their servants; all to continue in prayer, watchfulnesse, thanksgiving, to walk wisely towards them that are without, to be carefull of godly and holy communication: Thus knowing their estate onely for the generall he teacheth them in generall, and therefore now he concludeth, as if he should say, *I speak somewhat generally because I do not know your* Col. 4. 8.

estates in particular; and therefore I send to you Tychicus, a faithfull good minister, that he may learn your estates in particular, and deal with you answerably. It may be some of you want corrosives; it may be some of you want cordials; it may be some have need to be searched and humbled, some of you to be encouraged and comforted: I have sent him to enquire into your estates in particular, that he may do accordingly. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he may know your estate and comfort your hearts.

Vses. The use of this is threefold.

1. *Instruct.* First, for instruction. Hence we may see that a minister doeth but his duty when he enquireth into mens estates how they stand before God: It is not prying into other mens matters; it is not busie-bodinesse in other mens affairs; it is not a spirit of meddling: No, a minister doeth but his duty when he doeth it. How can a Physician apply true and proper physick unlesse he enquire into the state of mens bodies? *Jer. 8. 12.* Now a minister is a physician to mens souls; and therefore he is to enquire of

the

he state of mens souls how they stand before God. They are men of Belial hat say, *What? must the minister know ll?* and, *Can there be nothing done but the minister must heare of it?* These are very evil speeches. The minister doeth but his duty when he is inquisitive.

The second use may be for reproof. If it be the duty of a minister to enquire of mens estates before God, then those people are too blame that wil not make known their estates. What is the reason that so many men abide in a rotten estate, but because they are loth to open truly and fully what they are to Gods ministers? Nay many are like them in the prophet, *who say to the seers, See not.* They would not have Gods ministers see what they do, nor see what they are. I confesse there be some that will open something about their estates, but not all they know by themselves: They keep in the main; ike some foolish clients who misnform their Counsel, making their case better then indeed it is, and so heir cause miscarrieth: So some keep

2. *Reproof.*

Isai. 30. 10.

in

in that which would give moſt light to judge of their eſtates: But this ought not ſo to be. I can tell you an example of one that being troubled about his eſtate before God, and ſome miniſter being by, *Oh*, ſaith he, *I will tell you all that I know of my ſelf; I'le not hide a ſyllable from you: and, if I be yet no better then a wretch, I beſeech you tell me plainly that I am ſo; and if I be in Chriſt, I beſeech you prove it plainly unto me.* This man took a right courſe, and thereby through Gods mercy came in a little ſpace to the aſſurance of his own bleſſed eſtate and condition.

3. Exhortation. Thirdly, for exhortation. Let Gods miniſters know of your eſtates, that they may be able to ſpeak to you accordingly. By this means they may ſpeak words in due ſeaſon, and like wiſe houſe-holders give every one his portion. If you had but a cut finger, would not you be glad to have the right plaiſtre? and if you had a burning fever, would you not deſire the right remedy? how much more in the curing the ſickneſſe of the ſoul?

Now

Now from the text it self without any cutting up of the words we may gather foure propositions:

1. That there is an estate that every man is in, either an estate of grace or an estate of sin.

2. That this state may be known.

3. That every man should be willing to have his estate examined, that it may be known whether it be good or no.

4. That a man can never have true comfort till it be known that he is in a good estate.

1. For the first, That there is an estate that every one is in, either of grace or sin; See this in Simon Magus: *I perceive*, saith S. Peter, *thou art in the gall of bitternesse and in the bond of iniquity*. See, he telleth him what estate he was in, *viz.* a very bad estate, in a desperate and damnable condition. In this state of sin and misery are all they that are not renewed by Christ Jesus. And for the other see an example, Rom. 16. 7. *Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord*: The text there telleth us what estate he was in, *Observ.* 1. *Acts* 8. 23. *Rom.* 16. 7.

in, a very good estate; He was a man in Christ, *a choise man*, that is, a man in the state of grace and salvation. In this estate are all they that are called and sanctified and made new creatures unto God. Every man is in one of these two estates: there is no middle estate which is neither the one nor the other, but in one of these two are all the whole world. The reason is,

1. From everlasting the world was divided onely into two ranks, either Elect or Reprobates.

2. Here in this life the world is divided onely into two companies, either Godly or Ungodly.

Matth. 25. 32. 3. At the day of judgement the Lord will divide the whole world onely into two sorts, either Sheep or Goats.

2. *Prop.* Election may be known. II. For the second proposition, This estate may be known: Especially every man may come to the knowledge of his own estate before God. I do not say that every man may know whether he be elect or reprobate: yet this I say too, That a godly soul may know that

t is elected to life. The Apoſtle exhor-
eth all that are godly *to give diligence*
o *make their election ſure*, 2. Pet. 1. 10.
He that atteineth to that faith which
he Apoſtle calleth *the faith of Gods e-*
ect, Titus 1. 1. and receiveth the word
of God, as Paul ſaith the Theſſalonians
did, and thence concludeth they were
choſen of God, 1. Theſſ. 1. 4, 5. he
may attein to much aſſurance of his e-
ection. But though a godly man may
know he is elected of God, yet for re-
probation the caſe is not alike: 1. Be-
cauſe ungodlineſſe is not alwayes joyn-
ed with perſeverance. 2. Beſides,
God hath many reaſons why he doth
not reveal mens reprobation unto
them: They would then be outragious
in evil, deſperate in wickedneſſe;
there could be no order or government
in humane life: Beſides that, the form
of Chriſts adminiſtration of his king-
dome could not be ſo as it now is: for
Chriſt hath bid his miniſters preach the
Goſpel to every creature, to whole
pariſhes and towns, and except none:
Chriſt will not tell his miniſters which

be

be reprobates and which not, that they may preach unto all, and labour to work upon every ſoul; and there is none in a pariſh but the miniſter muſt look upon him as one who may be ſaved: Chriſt will not tell his people which be reprobates, that they may look upon every one as one that may be wonne to the faith for any thing they know: Chriſt will not tell the reprobates themſelves that they are reprobates, that every one of them may come to the uſe of the means; How do they know but they may find grace? yea, and the Lord doth ſeriouſly call them; and it is their fault if they obey not. It is Gods infinite mercy, that election, which is ſuch a comfortable point, may be revealed to Gods children; and that reprobation, which is ſo intolerable and bitter, is not revealed to the reprobate. Nevertheleſſe let me adde, That ſome particular men have known their own reprobation, as Cain and Judas, &c. And there be ſhrewd ſignes of it: (I do not ſpeak it as though I meant to perſwade any man that he is one;

Shrewd ſignes of it.

one, but onely that he may take heed of them.)

1. Malicing the known truth is a very shrewd signe: As, when men know that godlinesse is pleasing to God, and yet they hate a man for it; when men know the minister is commanded to rebuke sin, and yet they will spite him for so doing: this is a very shrewd signe. Paul persecuted the truth; *but yet*, saith he, *I obteined mercy, because I did it ignorantly*, 1. Tim. 1. 13. intimating that if he had done it against knowledge he had been in danger to have found no mercy. And therefore ye that mock and hate those wayes which God hath commanded, I beseech you, take heed lest ye sin unpardonably.

2. Absolute apostasie is a shrewd signe too of reprobation: When men have been very forward in the profession of the truth, and fall totally away and prove miserably profane, as the Apostle sheweth, Heb. 6. 6.

3. Finall impenitency. This is an infallible signe of reprobation, when a man liveth in sin dieth in sin, and goeth away

away without repentance. *Luke* 13. 3. *Except ye repent ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* There be many of us have ſtood out long in impenitency; let us take heed leſt if we ſtay any longer we fall upon this great evil.

That a man may know his eſtate, proved.

I return to the point: A man may come to the knowledge of his own eſtate before God. I do not mean, Whether he be in the ſtate of election or reprobation; but he may know, Whether he be in the ſtate of ſalvation or damnation, that is, Whether he be in the way that leadeth to heaven or hell, Whether he be in ſuch a caſe that if he die now he ſhall be ſaved or not ſaved: Every man may thus know in what eſtate he is;

Reaſons I.

1. Becauſe the word of God ſheweth a man this: As for example, *He that committeth ſinne is of the devil.* Mark; the Apoſtle telleth us what eſtate that man is in that liveth in ſinne, in a very bad eſtate. So on the contrary; *He that hath this hope purgeth himſelf.* Mark; the Apoſtle telleth us what eſtate that man is in who purgeth himſelf; he is in a very

1. *John* 3. 8.

1. *John* 3. 3.

very good estate, in a state of true hope in Christ. And so 1. Cor. 6. 10. the Apostle nameth divers who are not in the state of salvation but of damnation: if they die in such case they cannot inherit the kingdome of heaven. So that if a man will but search the word, and believe that God doth say true, he may know his estate.

2. Without this knowledge a man cannot have an accusing or an excusing conscience in respect of his estate: but men may have, yea many men have, a conscience accusing them of being in a very bad estate; and many men have an excusing conscience that plainly doth witnesse that they are in a very good and gracious estate. *I and my people are wicked*, saith Pharaoh. His conscience did accuse him of being in a bad estate. *I am holy*, saith David; *I am thy servant*. His conscience told him he was in the state of grace. So that ye need not go farre to know what estate you are in: there is that in your bosome that can decide the matter. II. *Exod.* 9. 27. *Psal.* 86. 2.

3. Men cannot desire nor flie from III.

an unknown estate: But men are commanded to flie from a bad estate, and seek out a good one: Therefore they may know the one and the other. *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flie from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,* saith John to the Pharisees. He supposeth these men might easily know that they were in a very bad estate, or else how could he say thus unto them?

Matth. 3.7,8.

Before I come to the Uses let us consider these three things:

1. That every man living is born in a very bad estate. We all know it well; but oh that we would consider it! We are all by nature children of wrath. Now here lieth the question, When did we change our estates? We are in the same state of damnation wherein we were born except we are come out of it. I say, here lieth the question, Whether we are come out of it or no, whether we have mended our estate.

*Eph.*2.3.

2. Consider that the greatest part of the world never mend their estates:

But

But as they were born in a cursed estate, so they live and die in it. And I speak not this of heathen onely; but alas! how many in the visible church do so? How many were there in the church of Philippi whom the Apostle could not think of without weeping when he *Phil.3.17* considered in what estate they were. So in the church of Corinth, not many *1.Cor.1.* wise, not many rich, not many noble *26.* called; but commonly the meanest in the eye of the world were in the best estate towards God. Nay more then so; Many of them who seek to get into a good estate misse of it and perish. See, *Luke 13.24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate:* Mark; it's a strait gate, and letteth but few in: *for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.* Here and there a few even where the constant ministery is.

3. Consider that it is a marvellous hard thing to passe from state unto state, from a bad to a good estate. There is a very vast gulf between the state of sinne and the state of grace, and it is marvellous hard to passe it. These things premised, the uses follow. 3.

Vſe 1. *Of Inſtruction.*

It is every mans duty to enquire after his eſtate.

1. This point may be many wayes uſefull: Firſt, for inſtruction. If God hath made it poſſible unto us to find out what eſtate every one of us is in, then ſure he would have us go about it and enquire after it. God might have left us to periſh in our naturall blindneſſe, never to have known in what caſe we had been untill we were paſt recovery. Firſt, we are all wanderers from God and from the wayes of peace; and therefore God might juſtly have ſuffered us for ever to have wandred, and never to have been able to find out whether we had been right or wrong. Secondly, God hath dealt ſo with ſome: He hath ſuffered ſome to go on all their dayes blindfold to hell. Thus the Lord dealt with the ſcribes and Phariſees; *Let them alone*, ſaith he; *they be blind leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.* Ye ſee the Lord hath dealt ſo with ſome; and it is his mercy he hath not dealt ſo with us. Sith God hath made it poſſible for us to know, it is our duty to enquire after it: And that yet further for theſe reaſons:

Matth. 15. 14.

1. Firſt,

1. First, because the Lord commandeth it: *Examine your own selves whether ye be in the faith; prove your selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* Where ye see the Apostle commandeth the duty of self-triall: And consider how he presseth it upon us: 1. *Do ye not know what estate you are in? then examine and enquire.* 2. *Do ye think ye are in a good estate? look ye prove it, and be sure ye be not in an errour. Do ye object ye do not know, neither can ye know? No? then your estate is very bad: find out some good tokens in you, except ye be reprobates.* This command makes it a clear duty. *Reasons* 2. Cor. 13. 5.

2. But a second reason to prove it our duty to enquire what estate we are in, is, because without the knowledge thereof we can never have any true peace in our consciences: The conscience must needs be without peace so long as we are ignorant of what estate we are in: *Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* First the Apostle sheweth their Rom. 5. 1.

estate; they were in a state of *justification*: & from the knowledge thereof they had *peace*. We are bound to get true peace to our consciences: Oh, what a lamentable maze are we in till our consciences have peace! and this they cannot have untill we are fully acquainted
Job 22.21 in what case we stand before God: *Acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace.*

3. Thirdly, we can never be fit for any duty of Gods worship as long as we know not what estate we are in: We can never be fit for any holy duty, to heare, pray, receive the sacrament:
1.Cor. 11. 28. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat*, &c. First he must examine in what estate he is before he can be fit for that
Lam. 3. 40. high service. So for repentance: *Let us search and try our wayes, and turn again to the Lord*: first find our selves in an ill estate, and then return. So for joy; It is a duty to rejoyce in the Lord: But we are never fit for rejoycing till we have proved what estate we
Gal.6.4. are in: *Let every man prove his own work; so shall he have rejoycing.* We can never be fit for any duty until we know

in

in what estate we are in, because every duty varieth according as the estate of every man is. To instance in prayer; He that is not in the state of grace must pray one way, and he that is in the state of salvation must pray another way: the one, that he may be converted and brought home to God; the other, that he may be strengthened and encreased in grace. And so for the duty of hearing, &c.

The second use is for direction; to let us understand by what means we may know what estate we are in. There be foure means to know this.

Vse 2. Of Direction.

Means to know what estate we are in.

1. By our outward and inward actions. I do not say, by our outward actions: For a man may be in the state of hypocrisie, and yet his outward actions may be good. Neither do I say by our inward actions alone: For a man may be in the state of self-deceit, and yet say his heart is good and his meaning and mind good. But I say, by them both put together. Our Saviour setteth it out by a tree; *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bring-* Matth. 7. 17.

eth forth corrupt fruit. So if the heart bringeth forth the fruit of righteouſneſſe, joy in good things, patience, meekneſſe, gentleneſſe, love, obedience, godly converſation, &c. theſe evidence a good eſtate: but if the heart bringeth forth deadneſſe, earthlineſſe, impatience, evil converſation, &c. theſe are corrupt fruits and ſignes of a very bad eſtate.

2. Ye may know what eſtates ye are in by your inclinations and diſpoſitions, from whence theſe actions proceed. Are your hearts inclined heavenward and God-ward, as Davids? are ye bent to holineſſe and ſelf-deniall, &c. as a bow is bent to ſhoot the arrow? This is a ſigne of a good eſtate: as 1. Chron. 22. 19. there is ſpeech of *ſetting the heart to ſeek God.* Ye know when a man will do a thing indeed, we ſay *he is ſet on't.* It may be ye do ſome good duties, make ſome fair offers of ſeeking God; but are your hearts ſet on't? or are they ſet on the world and inclined earth-ward? The inclinations of every creature in the world do ever

Pſal. 119. 112.

ſhew

ſhew what the creature is. How do we know that a ſtone is heavy? Becauſe it inclineth downward. How do we know a man is cholerick? Becauſe he is inclined unto wrath. So a mans eſtate may be known by his conſtant inclination either to good or evil.

3. One may know what eſtate he is in by that reflexive act which is proper onely to man. There is an act in mans ſoul (we call it a *reflex* act) which no creature hath but onely man, whereby he can perceive what himſelf is and doeth. When a man thinketh or ſpeaketh, he can reflect upon himſelf and perceive what he thinketh or ſpeaketh: when he prayeth, he can reflect upon his own heart, and perceive how it carrieth it ſelf all along in his prayers. I ſay, no creature in the world hath in it this reflexive act but onely man. The fire burneth, but it cannot reflect upon its own burning: *Oculus non videt ſe videre*, The eye ſeeth, but it doth not ſee that it doth ſee; that is, That creature doth not perceive what it doeth when it ſeeth. But every man hath this reflexive

reflexive act in him, whereby he is pri
vie to what himself thinketh, doeth, is
1. Cor. 2. 11. *None knoweth the things of a man save th spirit of a man that is in him.* This is the reason why some know not what estate they are in, because they choke their own spirit and hoodwink their consci ences. Thine own heart knoweth how it is with thee, and would faithfully tell thee if thou wouldst enquire of it and hearken unto it. Search with God's candle, and thou mayst easily find what
Prov. 20. 27. is in thee. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.*

4. Ye may know what estate ye are in by a certain kind of feeling. As there is a kind of bodily feeling whereby every man knoweth the estate of his body whether he be sick or in health, so there is a spirituall feeling. The two
Luke 24. 32. disciples did feel their hearts burn. Paul did feel a great combat in him
Eph. 4. 19. between the flesh and the spirit: So if men be covetous and worldly, they may feel it. Yet indeed some men be past feeling; Their case is the worse be

cause

auſe they cannot feel how bad it is: But for the moſt, they may eaſily feel what their eſtate is.

The third uſe is, to ſhew you the impediments that hinder this knowledge. If you would attein to know what eſtate you are in, then remove the impediments; which are *Vſe 3. Impediments.*

1. Vain thoughts. Men who are in a ſtate of ſin and wrath, yet have many vain thoughts lodging within them keeping them from knowing it: *God is mercifull*; and *Chriſt died for ſinners*; and, *There be worſe ſinners then they*; *why ſhould they think ſo ill of themſelves?* and, *they may be better all in good time:* Theſe vain thoughts hoodwink their eyes that they cannot ſee their eſtate, nor reſolve that it is ſo dangerous as indeed it is. *O Jeruſalem, waſh thy heart from wickedneſſe: how long ſhall theſe vain thoughts lodge within thee?* They were in a very bad eſtate; and yet they had ſuch vain thoughts that they could not ſee it. *Jer. 4. 14.*

2. Preſumption is another impediment. Men pray, and heare, and do other

other good duties, and ſo take all to b
well without ſerious examining. Th
was the caſe of the Laodicean people
Rev. 3. 17. They thought they had that in the
which they had not, and that the
eſtate was good, when it was nothi
ſo.

Another let are the Cares of th
life: Whereby the heart is ſo occupie
that it doth not find time to ſearch i
own eſtate. Therefore our Savio
Luke 21. 34. ſaith, *Take heed that your hearts be not o*
vercharged with the cares of this life, le
that day come upon you unawares; intima
ting that theſe cares are great lets fro
conſidering our eſtates.

4. Another let is an Evil conſcience
which affrighteth a man ſo ſoon as h
beginneth to ſtirre, and maketh hi
afraid to go on to look ſoundly into hi
John 3. 20. eſtate. *He that doeth evil hateth the ligh*
Rom. 3. 11. 5. Another let is Ignorance. *Ther*
is none that underſtandeth, none that ſeek
eth after God. Mark; they did not ſee
in what caſe they ſtood before God be
cauſe they did not underſtand.

6. Another let is Spirituall ſloth and
ſluggiſh-

uggishnesse of heart. Men cannot en-
ure to take pains with their own
earts till they have made out a true
dgement in what case they are: They
egin and quickly give over; and so for
ant of diligence and pains-taking
ake nothing sure.

The last use is for exhortation; That all men would bestirre themselves and set in earnest upon this enquirie. That we may every one know in what state we stand *Vse 4. Of Exhortation.*

1. Consider, this is an enquiry about our souls. We enquire about our outward man, about the estate of our bodyes, and worldly affairs, &c. oh, let us not neglect this main enquiry, *Am I in Christ, yea or no? Am I a new creature, yea or no? Doth my soul live to God or no?*

2. Consider, this is a question about our everlasting estate. We can never have comfort untill we have put this out of question: and therefore this is a question which all questions must give way unto. If ye be not in Christ, ye had need lay aside all and look about it onely.

onely. How can men eat, drink, ſlee
&c. ſith the wrath of God abide
upon all unbelievers? Me thinks o
ſouls ſhould take no content, do n
thing elſe but faint after Chriſt, unt
we know our intereſt in him. I ſay
gain, This is the grand enquiry, that b
ſineſſe which all buſineſſes muſt giv
place unto. Oh, the ſloth of our ſouls
Let us in time awake and rouſe the
up, and never reſt untill we know o
own eſtate to be good before God, th
ſo our hearts may have comfort, an
that with God.

A Trea

A treatise Of Conscience.

Rom. 2. 15.

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witnesse, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

I Have shewed you, That every man is in an estate before God. And that hath made way now to a treatise of conscience; which will shew us what estate we are in before God. I desire to handle it common-place-wise: And first I will tell you in briefe what the conscience of every man is. I say, of every *man*: For Angels and devils have a conscience too: ye may see it in the speech of the Angel to John when John would have worshipped him, *I am thy fellow-servant*, saith he: *see thou do it not*. Mark; *What Conscience is.* *Rev.* 19. 10.

He

He had a conſcience that could ſay, *I am a ſervant, and therefore muſt not take worſhip to me.* So for the devils: When our Saviour bade them come forth of
Matth. 8. 29. the poſſeſſed, they ſay, *Art thou come to torment us before our time.* See; they had a conſcience that told them there would be a time when they ſhould be further tormented. But I am not to ſpeak of ſuch conſciences, but of the conſcience of man. Now the conſcience of man is the judgement of man upon himſelf as he is ſubject to Gods judgement. Divines uſe to expreſſe it in this Syllogiſme, *He that truly believeth in Chriſt ſhall be ſaved:* My conſcience telleth me this is Gods word. *But I believe truly in Chriſt:* My conſcience telleth me this alſo. *Therefore I ſhall be ſaved.* And ſo alſo on the contrary ſide. So that conſcience is a mans true
1. Cor. 11. 31. judgement of himſelf: *If we would judge our ſelves*; that is, If we would bring our ſelves before the tribunal of conſcience to receive its judgement.

Foure propoſitions are conteined in that portion of Scripture which I have choſen

choſen to make the ſubject of this enſuing treatiſe, Rom. 2. 15.

1. That there is in every man a conſcience. [*Their conſciences bearing them witneſſe,*] Every one of them had a conſcience bearing them witneſſe. *Foure Propoſitions.*

2. That the light which conſcience is directed to work by is knowledge. [*written in their hearts.*]

3. That the bond that bindeth a mans conſcience is Gods law. [*which ſhew the effect of the law written in their hearts.*]

4. That the office and duty of conſcience is to bear witneſſe either with our ſelves or againſt our ſelves, accuſing or excuſing our ſelves or actions. [*bearing witneſſe, and their thoughts accuſing or excuſing one another.*] I begin with the firſt.

Propoſition I.

There is in every man a conſcience.

THere was a conſcience in all theſe heathen in the text: *their conſciences bearing them witneſſe.* There was a conſcience 1. There is in every man a conſcience

Joh. 8. 9. science in the Scribes and Pharisees: *being convicted of their own consciences.* There is a conscience in good men: as in

2. Cor. 1. 12. Paul; *Our rejoycing is this, the testimony of our conscience.* There is a conscience

Tit. 1. 15. in wicked men: *their mind and conscience is defiled.* As it is impossible the fire should be without heat, so it is impossible that any man should be without a conscience. Indeed we use to say, Such an one hath no conscience: but our meaning is, that he hath no good conscience. But every one hath a conscience, either good or bad. The Lord engraved conscience in man when he created him at first. True it is, since the fall of man conscience is miserably corrupted; but man can never put it off: Conscience continueth for ever in every man, whether he be in earth or heaven or hell. The most base and deviliſh profanelings in the world have a conscience: Let them choke it or smother it as much as they can, let them whore it or game it or drink it away as much as they are able for their hearts; yet conscience will continue in spite of their teeth.

1. No

1. No length of time can wear this conſcience out. What made Joſephs brethren to remember the cruel uſage they ſhewed him but conſcience? It was about twenty years before; yet they could not wear it out.

2. No violence nor force is able to ſuppreſſe conſcience but that one day or other it will ſhew it ſelf. What made Judas go and carry back the money that he betrayed our Saviour for, and alſo to cry out, *I have ſinned*, but conſcience? No queſtion but he laboured to ſuppreſſe it; but he could not.

3. No greatneſſe nor power is able to ſtifle conſcience but that it will one day like a band-dog flie in a ſinners face. What made Pharaoh crie out, *I am wicked*, but conſcience? He was a great King; and yet he was not able to overpower conſcience.

4. No muſick, mirth or jovializing can charm conſcience, but it will play the devil to a wretched ſoul for all that. What was the evil ſpirit of melancholy that came upon Saul but con-

science? He thought to allay it with instruments of musick; but it still came again.

5. Death it self is not able to part conscience from a sinner. What is that worm that shall never die but onely conscience? and in hell conscience is as that fire that never goeth out.

I confesse some seem to have lost conscience quite: They can omit good duties as though they had no conscience at all; they can deferre repentance and turning to God as though they had no more conscience then a beast: but one day conscience will appear, and shew plainly that it was present with them every moment of their lives, and privie to all their thoughts and all their wayes, and set before them all the things that they have done. Be men never so secure and senseless, and seared for the present, conscience will break out either first or last: Either here or in hell it will appear to every man, That he hath and ever had a conscience.

Reasons Now the reasons why the Lord did plant

plant a conſcience in every man living are,

1. Becauſe the Lord is a very righteous Judge: And as he commandeth earthly judges not to judge without witneſſe; ſo he himſelf will not judge without witnes, and therefore he planteth a conſcience in every one to bring in evidence for him or againſt him at Gods tribunall. 1.

2. Becauſe the Lord is very merciſull. We are wonderous forgetfull and mindleſſe of God and of our own ſouls, and have need to be quickned up to our duties: therefore the Lord hath given every one of us a conſcience to be a continuall monitour. Sometime we forget to pray, and then conſcience putteth us in mind to go to God: ſometime we are dull in the duty, and conſcience is as a prick to quicken us: ſometime our paſſions are diſtempered, and then conſcience checketh & commandeth us to bridle them. We ſhould never be kept in any order if it were not for conſcience: Therefore hath the Lord in mercy given us a conſcience. 2.

Vse 1. The first use is, to condemn that diabolical proverb common among men; *Conscience is hanged a great while ago.* No, no: Achitophel may hang himself, but he cannot hang his conscience: Saul may kill himself, but conscience cannot be killed. It is *a worm that never dieth.* *Mark* 9. 44. As the reasonable soul of man is immortall, so conscience also is immortall.

Vse 2. Secondly, this condemneth such as go about to suppresse conscience: Their conscience maketh them melancholick and lumpish now and then, and they go about to shake it off. Alas! why do ye go about that which is utterly impossible? Ye may suppresse it for a while, and gagge it for a while; but ye can never shake it off. Conscience sticketh so close that a man may as soon shake off himself as his conscience. And indeed his conscience is himself: *Let a man examine himself,* that is, his conscience. *1. Cor.* 11. 28. *Judge in your selves,* that is, Judge in your consciences. verse 13.

Vse 3. Thirdly, this confuteth that drunken opinion, That conscience is nothing but

but a preſent fit of melancholy. No; It cauſeth it may be the preſent melancholick fit, but it is not it. Conſcience is a ſtanding power in a man that is evermore with him, and will evermore judge him and condemn him if he be guiltie before God. It will be with him when his dumpiſh fit is over. Let him laugh and be merry; yet conſcience lies at the bottome of all, and will ſpoyl all the mirth. Let the drunkard be never ſo joviall; I will not believe but conſcience in the midſt of that drunken mirth cauſeth ſome ſadneſſe within, and telleth him this is a very wicked life. Let the carnall hypocrite daub up the matter with good duties and good prayers and good hopes; I cannot believe but there is a conſcience lieth at the bottome and telleth him he is rotten for all this. You may ſee this in Cain: He had been at a good duty, ſacrificing to the Lord; but his countenance fell when he had done, conſcience did lie at the bottome, and did tell him God did not accept him. Conſcience is with evil men at church, at ſermon, at ſacrament,

Prov. 14. 13.

Gen. 4. 5.

and telleth them secretly that they are not the persons to whom the blessing of these ordinances belong.

Vse 4. Lastly, this may be for exhortation to the godly; That they would consider this, that they have ever a conscience within them; and that therefore they would labour alwayes to keep it void of offense: which was Pauls exercise Acts 24.16. Take heed you offend not your consciences in duties of piety towards God, in your prayings, hearings, &c. no nor in your callings, eatings, drinkings, liberties, recreations: Look alwayes to your consciences, that you offend them not, because they are ever with you. When two live ever together, they had need not offend one another; else there will be no quiet: You and your consciences must ever live together: if ye offend them, ye are like to have very ill lives. Better live with a curst scold then live with an offended conscience: ye had better offend the whole world then offend conscience. There are none whom ye are alwayes to live with; but conscience

ye

ye are alwayes to live with. Ye are not alwayes to live with your husbands, nor alwayes with your wives, nor alwayes with your parents or maſters; there is a time when you muſt part: but conſcience and you will never part: Therefore labour to keep it void of offenſe. And thus much of the firſt propoſition, *There is in every man a conſcience.*

Propoſition II.

The light that conſcience acteth by is knowledge.

THis knowledge is twofold; 1. Of Gods law, 2. Of our ſelves. *II. Propoſition*

1. The knowledge of Gods law. To know Gods will what is good, what is bad; what God cõmandeth, what he forbiddeth. Every man under heaven hath this law of God in ſome meaſure writ in his conſcience. I confeſſe, Gods children onely know Gods law to purpoſe, as it is a light to guide them in the way of ſalvation: but all the world have ſome meaſure of knowledge, whereby they

they may gather that there is a God, and that he ought to be worshipped and obeyed, and that he hath power over life and death. All the world have knowledge in some measure what is good and what is not, what is to be done and what not, what is according to conscience and what not: All the world have this knowledge in some measure; I do not say, enough for salvation, but enough to make them inexcusable before God for not following that light and not living according to that knowledge which they have. If there were not some light in this behalf, some knowledge of the law of God in every man, conscience could do nothing.

2. Knowledge of our selves: This also is the light that conscience acteth by. There is in every man some measure of knowledge of himself according to the measure of knowledge that he hath of Gods law. Our consciences look backward and forward; forward to Gods law, and backward on our selves, Whether we be such as Gods law requireth,

yea

yea or no. Firſt, ye may find this in good men. This light did the conſcience of David go by: *I was upright before God*, ſaith his conſcience, *and I kept my ſelf from mine own iniquitie.* His conſcience had a light whereby he knew what he did. Secondly, ye ſhall find this in wicked men. This light the conſcience of Achan went by: *I have ſinned againſt the Lord God of Iſrael, and thus and thus have I done.* Pſal. 18. 23. Joſh. 7. 20.

Theſe are the two lights that every mans conſcience goes by: It hath light in ſome meaſure to know the law of God, what he ſhould do and what he ſhould not do; and it hath light in ſome meaſure to know himſelf, what he hath done or not done, whether he hath done as he ſhould yea or no. Now theſe two lights are neceſſary; as thus I prove.

Firſt, the knowledge of Gods law is neceſſary. For elſe conſcience cannot work. A drunkard might be drunk every day in the year, and yet conſcience could not trouble him nor condemn him of ſinne unleſſe he knew the law, That God hath forbid drunkenneſſe.

And

And so the swearer. And so evil words and bad thoughts conscience cannot accuse for, unlesse there be so much light as to know they are forbidden. And therefore Divines do all say that the *Syntereſis* is necessary to the exercise of conscience. The *Syntereſis* is this: When a man keeps in his mind the knowledge of the things conteined in Gods law: namely, That we must obey God, honour our parents, not commit adultery, not kill, not steal, not lie, not covet, &c. Unlesse the knowledge of these be kept in mind conscience cannot work. And therefore when we would stirre a mans conscience, we appeal to his know-
1.Cor.6.9. ledge; *Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdome of God?* As if he had said, Your own consciences may condemn you to the pit of hell if ye be unrighteous, because your *Syntereſis* can tell you that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdome of God. This is the reason why we say that there is a naturall conscience and there is an illuminated conscience; because some have no light but onely the light of nature,

ure, ſome have beſides the light of Gods word, which ſheweth that which ature ſheweth, and much more clearly, nd teacheth many things more which ature cannot teach : And hence the onſcience of the illightned condemeth for ſuch things as the naturall conience never ſtirreth about.

Secondly, the knowledge of our elves is needfull; elſe conſcience cannot act neither. Though we know what Gods law requireth and what not, hat is good and what not, yet unleſſe we know whether we go with it r againſt it conſcience cannot accuſe or excuſe. As for example; A cloſe ypocrite, he knoweth wel enough that he Lord hath condemned hypocriſie, nd that hypocrites muſt have their ortion in hell: yet if he do not know imſelf to be an hypocrite, his conſcience can never condemn him for being ne. And therefore both theſe knowedges are neceſſary, as well the knowedge of a mans ſelf as of Gods law. Many who had a hand in crucifying our aviour, ſinned grievouſly; yet they

ſinned

sinned not against knowledge becau
Luke 23. 34. they knew not what they did: *Fathe forgive them, they know not what they d*

Thirdly, It is a contradiction to s a blind conscience in act. The consc ence cannot be blind and yet actuall condemn. Indeed the conscience it se may be blind, but it can never act and b blind: If it truly accuse or excuse i must have some light. It is true, it ma erroneously excuse or accuse, and ye have no true light: Seeming light i enough to do that: seeming knowledg is enough to make conscience erron ously excuse: As they who killed th
John 16.2 Apostles, their consciences excuse them, and told them they did Go good service: they seemed to know was good service to God, and therefo their consciences excused them, &c Thus ye see that the light that consci ence worketh by is knowledge.

Vse 1. The use of this point is first, to l us see the infinite necessity of know ledge. As good have no conscience a all as conscience without knowledge for it cannot act and perform its office

This

This is the reaſon why ſo many thou-
ands go on in their ſinnes without re-
entance, becauſe being ignorant they
ave no conſcience to prick them there-
nto: as Jer. 8. 6. *No man repenteth him*
f his wickedneſſe, ſaying, What have I
one? Why, what was the reaſon that
onſcience did not prick them, and ſay,
his thou haſt done and that, Thus ye
ave rebelled, &c? The text anſwereth
n the next verſe, *My people know not*
he judgement of the Lord. The ſtork
noweth her time, and the turtle, and the
allow; but my people do not know their
uties.

Another uſe is, to exhort us that we would labour to perfect the light of conſcience, that it may be able to guide us and direct us unto heaven. Our conſcience hath knowledge enough by the light of nature to make us inexcuſable, and to clear the juſtice of God though he ſhould damne us for ever: but there muſt be a greater light then that, that muſt guide us to heaven. O let us pray to Chriſt the true light to ſet up this light in us, that we may never be at *Uſe 2.*

at a losse in our way to happinesse, ne
ver step out of the right path but ou
conscience may be able to put us in a
gain, never go slowly but our consci
ence may spurre us on faster; that ou
conscience may not be like the snu
of a candle in a socket, that flameth u
now and then and then is dark again
and again it flameth out and is dark a
gain: A man may see his book by it
but he cannot see to reade; he may se
his pen and ink by it, but he cannot se
to write; a woman may see her needl
and cloth by it, but she cannot see t
work: so it is with some mens consci
ences: Their light is so dimme tha
they can see the duties, but they canno
see to do them; they can see the com
mandments of God, but they canno
see to obey them. O labour to perfec
the light of your consciences, that y
may see to walk by them. And thu
much also of the second proposition
*The light that conscience acteth by is know
ledge.*

Now I should come to the third pro
position which as I first propounde
then

them was this, *The bond that bindeth conſcience is Gods law:* But I will now a little alter the method, and make the other which was propounded laſt to be the third in the handling; and it is this,

Propoſition III.

The office of Conſcience is to bear witneſſe, to accuſe or excuſe.

COnſcience is put into this office by God himſelf. It is Gods officer: Not onely his regiſter-book that ſhall be opened at the day of judgement, wherein is ſet down our thoughts, words and deeds: but it is a preacher alſo to tell us our duty both towards God and towards man: yea, it is a powerfull preacher; it exhorteth, urgeth, provoketh: yea, the moſt powerfull preacher that can be; it will cauſe the ſtouteſt and ſtubborneſt heart under heaven to quake now and then; it will never let us alone till it have brought us either to God or to the devil. Conſcience is joyned in commiſſion with Gods owne ſpirit to be an

III. Propoſition. The office of Conſcience is to bear witneſſe.

inſtructour unto us in the way we ſhould walk; ſo that the ſpirit and it are reſiſted or obeyed together, grieved or delighted together: We cannot ſinne againſt conſcience but we ſinne alſo againſt Gods ſpirit; we cannot check our own conſciences but we check and quench the holy ſpirit of God.

The office of conſcience to our ſelves is, to bear witneſſe: *My conſcience beareth me witneſſe*, ſaith Paul. Conſcience is alwayes ready to do this office, if it ſhall at any time be invited unto it: For conſcience looketh ſometimes for inviting; ſometimes it will not bear witneſſe unleſſe we invite it and call upon it ſo to do. But there will come a time when it will do it and muſt do it and ſhall do it, namely at death or at judgement: then it will bear witneſſe whether men invite it or no. Now it may be ſuppreſſed and ſilenced and kept under from witneſſing; but then it muſt bear witneſſe and ſhall, either excuſing or accuſing, acquitting or condemning, *when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of mens hearts*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh.

Rom. 9. 1.

The

The properties that are given unto conſcience in the diſcharge of its office are foure: 1. It is ſupreme; 2. It is impartiall; 3. It is faithfull; 4. It is privie. *Foure Properties of Conſcience.*

1. It is ſupreme: It hath higheſt authoritie; it is the moſt uncontrollable and ableſt witneſſe that can be: the greateſt, weightieſt witneſſe in the world; better then ten thouſand witneſſes. Though all the world do condemn us, yet if our own conſcience do not, we need not fear: And ſo on the contrary, if conſcience do condemn us, it will be ſmall comfort though all the world flatter and commend and excuſe us. It is a ſupreme witneſſe: Though all the Angels in heaven ſhould come and bear witneſſe, their witneſſe is not ſo uncontrollable as conſcience is. There is no appealing from the witneſſe of conſcience; we muſt be tried by it. If conſcience do accuſe and condemn us, the Lord onely is greater then our conſcience, 1. John 3. 20. and will give judgement with it when it doth its office. And if our conſcience do not

condemne us, we may be confident to ſtand before all the judges and kings in the world, yea, *we may have confidence towards God*, ſaith the text. 2. And as conſcience is ſupreme in bearing of witneſſe, ſo alſo it is ſupreme in commanding. All the commands of it are powerfull and ſupreme: it will not be ſlighted: it bindeth kings and princes: Nay, though God himſelf command the contrary, yet can we not diſobey conſcience without ſinne. By this it appeareth, that when conſcience doth witneſſe its witneſſe is ſupreme; when conſcience commandeth, its command is ſupreme.

2. Conſcience as it is ſupreme in witneſſing or commanding ſo it is impartiall in judging. It reſpecteth no perſons, no eſtates, but accuſeth the richeſt as well as the pooreſt, the greateſt as well as the meaneſt. It made great Belſhazzar ſo to quake *that the joynts of his loyns were looſed, and his knees ſmote one againſt another*, Dan. 5. 6. It made great Felix to tremble to heare Paul ſpeak of righteouſneſſe and of judg-

men

ment. Felix thought to ſcare Paul; but conſcience ſcared Felix. So on the other ſide, it is impartiall in excuſing. It will give evidence of the good works of the pooreſt in the world as well as of the wealthieſt. Art thou never ſo mean? thy conſcience will be as ready to excuſe thee if thou haſt done well, as if thou wert the greateſt. It is impartiall in its office: Others, it may be, dare not or will not accuſe, but conſcience ſpareth none, no not it ſelf: Though its accuſations do load and burden and torment it ſelf, yet it will do its office.

3. Conſcience alſo is faithfull in its office and ſincere. It alwaies ſpeaketh of us as it thinketh: It may be deceived and miſtaken for a time, but it never ſpeaketh contrary to what it thinketh: It is a faithfull and ſincere witneſſe of our thoughts, words, actions, and courſes, whether they be good or evil, ſo far as it is illightned by Gods word. It ever giveth evidence aright; it never flattereth nor condemneth any without a cauſe: It is a faithfull and a very upright witneſſe. Others may diſſemble with us,

and commend us and applaud us when we are naught, and call us good men and good women when we are nothing so: but this will tell us plainly how vile and sinfull we are; and if we say we are good when we are not, it will tell us plainly we lie. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.* Mark; though he say it, yet his conscience giveth him the lie. It is faithfull again in excusing. It beareth witnesse of every good dutie we perform and of whatsoever good is in us. Though all Jobs friends spake evil of him, and God himself by his outward judgements seemed to condemn him for a wicked man, yet still his conscience (like a faithfull witnesse) did not forsake him, nay, it offered to reason with God himself, *I would reason with God: I know I shall be justified, and I will never forsake mine innocency till I die.* Still his conscience stood for him and excused him. Thus on both sides conscience is a faithfull and sincere witnesse: it will not be corrupted to speak otherwise then it knoweth the matter is.

1. *John* 2. 4.

Job 13. 3.

4. It

4. It is moſt privy to what it doth witneſſe. It is more privy to what we have done then all the world: It can ſay more for us or againſt us then all the world. *Thou knoweſt all the wickedneſſe that thy heart is privy unto*, ſaith Solomon to Shimei 1. Kings 2. 44.

The uſe of all this is; Seeing conſcience is ſo ſupreme, ſo impartiall, ſo faithfull, ſo privy, we ſhould take heed how we do any thing that might give it advantage againſt us. If we were to appear before an earthly judge to anſwer for our behaviour, and ſhould have a companion preſent continually with us, marking every thing in us, telling us of every fault, and witneſſing it againſt us unto the judge, how carefull would we be of doing any thing that might give him advantage againſt us? Lo, we have conſcience as a continuall watch-man, eſpying out all our wayes, ſetting down what-ever we do amiſſe, checking us for it for the preſent, and one day accuſing us before God and ſetting all things in order before our faces; Oh how ſhould we then labour *Vſe.*

to get into Christ Jesus, that our consciences may be purged in his bloud, and study all our life long to keep peace and friendship with them. Wo be to them who live in their sinnes! They will need no other witnesse to come against them to condemn them for ever but this witnesse conscience which lieth continually in their bosomes.

This I have spoken for the office of conscience, which is to bear witnesse either with us or against us: Now the parts of this bearing witnesse are, first, its single witnessing; secondly, its judiciall witnessing. By *single bearing witnesse* I mean that conscience beareth witnesse what we have done, and what we do, and what we intend to do, and what we are: By *judiciall bearing witnesse* I mean that conscience doth passe sentence on the same whether it be good or evil, whether it be concerning the action or the person.

Of Consciences single bearing witnesse.

First, therefore of the single bearing witnesse of conscience: And that is about three things: 1. What we have done; 2. What we intend to do;

3. What

3. What is the frame and bent of our heart.

1. It beareth witneſſe what we have done; what in our childhood, what in our youth, what in our riper age, what openly, what ſecretly. Thoſe things which ſeem to be forgotten conſcience will remember them to us: Like a writing in marble, though it may be filled and choked with duſt and covered with rubbiſh, yet when that is done away, and the ſtone ſwept clean, then the writing will appear legible; ſo though mens deeds may for the preſent ſeem to be forgotten, yet they are written in their hearts with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, as Origen obſerveth upon Jer. 17. 1. Now the thoughts and cares of this life put them out of our minds; but the time will come when all worldly buſineſſe ſhall ceaſe, and the onely buſineſſe ſhall be to look into the records of conſcience. We uſe to ſay, Conſcience hath a very good memory. The chief butler had forgot his promiſe unto Joſeph, but his conſcience remembred him of

it

Gen 41.9. it two years after: *I remember my faults this day*, saith his conscience. Adonibezek had forgot his cruelty; but his conscience brought it to his mind: *As*
Judg.1.7. *I have done so God hath requited me*, saith his conscience.

2. Conscience beareth witnesse of what we intend and purpose to do, whether against God or man. It will testifie every purpose and project of the heart though it be never acted, though it die in the heart and never come to light. Men little think of this: *Tush* (saith one) *I never did such a thing, though I once intended it, or had some thoughts about it.* Mark; those very thoughts will conscience bring forth and testifie what they were. Heare the
Rom.2.16. Apostle; *in that day God shall judge the secrets of men*, &c. The most hidden things conscience shall bring to light, and Christ shall judge them.

3. Conscience beareth witnesse of the bent and frame of our hearts, what we affect most and love most, and rejoyce and delight in most, and desire most and grieve for most, what our affections

affections runne upon moſt, whether upon God or the world, whether upon heaven or the things of this life. Conſcience bare witneſſe to David, that his delight was in the law of the Lord, that God was his portion, that Gods ſtatutes were his counſellers. Conſcience bare witneſſe to the falſe teachers in Chriſts time, that they affected vainglory and the prayſe of men more then the prayſe of God. Conſcience bare witneſſe to Demas, that notwithſtanding his fair profeſſion his heart was ſet upon the world. Conſcience bare witneſſe to Jehu, that for all his ſeeming zeal his heart was not upright. *Pſal.* 119. 77.

But it may be objected, How can this be? *The heart is deceitfull above all things: who can know it?* *Obj.* 1. *Jer.* 17. 9.

Who can know it? That is, Who elſe can know it but a man himſelf? None under God can know the heart of man but a mans own conſcience, the ſpirit of man that is in him. I confeſſe a man may be ignorant of ſome ſecret and particular deceit in his heart: but who knoweth not the generall ſtanding of his *Anſw.*

his own heart? or may know the chief bent of his own ſoul. David in a par-
Pſal.30.6. ticular deceit was ignorant: *I ſaid in my proſperity, I ſhall never be moved*, never diſtruſt God more, never be diſquieted in my mind more. He was deceived in that particular; but he knew very well the generall and chief bent of his heart, that it was truly ſet upon God and upon holineſſe. 2. It is true, many men take it that their hearts are ſet upon God when they are not: but what is the reaſon? Not becauſe they do not or may not know the contrary, that they love the world moſt; but becauſe they will not know it, they are unwilling to believe it, they are loth to have any bad conceit of themſelves. So that when Jeremy ſaith, *The heart is deceitfull above all things: who can know it?* his meaning is, What carnall man can abide to know the worſt of himſelf? 3. It is not becauſe they know it not, but becauſe they will not heare the teſtimony of conſcience: but when it telleth them truly how the caſe is with them, they gather all the rotten and

broken

broken pieces of arguments together to ſtop the mouth of conſcience, and to perſwade themſelves to think well of themſelves. 4. Men ſeem not to know their own hearts, not becauſe they do not know what they are, but becauſe they are ignorant of Gods law whereby they ſhould judge of themſelves. They know their hearts are ſet on the world, and that the bent and frame of their affections are placed on earthly things: but they hope an under-affection to God will be accepted, to love God in the ſecond place will ſerve the turn. They know they are carnall; but they hope ſuch carnality may be in a man and yet he be right.

Yea, but a mans heart may ſay on the contrary ſide, that he loveth the world more then he loveth God when he doth not: how then doth conſcience bear right witneſſe? I anſwer, *Obj. 2.*

This ariſeth either from the ſtrength of corruption and weakneſſe of grace: We look into our ſelves, and ſee our corruptions violent and our love to *Anſw.*

God

God small; and so we are deceived, not seeing the radicall power of this love of God, which in regard of its vertue is stronger then the other: As a fool, if he should feel hot water, would conclude that there is no cold at all in it; whereas there is radicall cold in that water, such as will expell all that heat in a little space. Or else this ariseth from anguish of spirit, which so disturbeth the mind that it cannot see its own condition nor be capable of the comforts belonging unto it; as it was with the Israelites, Exod. *6. 9.* otherwise doubtlesse we may know our own hearts; and when our conscience beareth witnesse its witnesse is right.

Vse 1. I. Use, of reproof to those who stand out against the witnesse of their conscience, and like hard-hearted felons plead still, *Not guiltie*, though never so much evidence come against them, though conscience oft tell them, this they have done, thus they do, such they are. Oh stop not your eares against conscience; stand not out against it, but believe its testimony, and make use of

it

it to repent of the evil it accuſeth of while mercy may be had, before God himſelf cometh and joyneth with conſcience to condemne for ever.

II. It ſerveth for ſingular encouragement to all to abound in good works. Conſcience will bear witneſſe of them all to our unſpeakable comfort in the time of afflictions, yea at death and judgement. Job felt it a ſweet thing to have conſcience give in teſtimony of his integrity and uprightneſſe: When his friends proved *miſerable comforters*, and God himſelf ſeemed to *write bitter things againſt him*, yet his conſcience witneſſed that he had been *eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*, he had fed the hungry and clothed the naked and comforted the fatherleſſe. There is not a good thing that ever we do but conſcience will afford us the ſweetneſſe and comfort of it in our troubles: *Remember, O Lord*, ſaith Hezekiah, *that I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart.* *Vſe 2.* *Iſai.38.3.*

We have ſpoken of conſciences ſingle bearing witneſſe: Now followeth its judi-

2. The judiciall bearing witnesse of conscience.

judiciall bearing witnesse; which is when it passeth sentence upon the morall of our actions, whether they be good or evil, whether blessed or cursed. This is performed by a Logicall discourse, by way of reasoning on this manner; *The word saith, Whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart*: That is the *syntereſis*. Now the assumption; *But I have had wanton eyes and lustfull lookings after a woman*: That is the single bearing witnesse of conscience. *Therefore I have committed adultery in my heart*: That is the judiciary sentence of conscience which it passeth on a mans self. So again; *Whosoever crucifieth the flesh with the affections and lusts, he is in Christ: But*, saith conscience, *I crucifie the flesh with its affections and lusts: Therefore I am in Christ*. Though there be not the form of this discourse in our consciences, yet there is the force of it: for when conscience dothjudicially witnesse against any man or for any man, it doth it by the word, and proceedeth in the vvay vvhich is propounded.

The

The uſe of this is, Firſt for comfort to the godly, who may hence gather the aſſurance of their ſalvation from the rule of Gods word and the witneſſe of their conſcience that they walk by this rule. The word ſaith, *He that hungreth and thirſteth after righteouſneſſe ſhall be filled; He that doth theſe things ſhall never fall*, &c. Get the rule of your hearts and lives to meete and ye have what ye deſire. O what infinite mercy is this to all godly ſouls, that the Lord hath planted this conſcience in their boſomes, that they need not go farre for their comfort: their owne conſciences and the rule may preach it to them. *Vſe* 1. Matth. 5. 6. 2. Pet. 1. 10.

Secondly, The wicked on the other ſide, if they continue as they are, may hence gather arguments for their own damnation. If the rule and conſcience might be heard they would ſpeak bitter things againſt them, and give a fearfull ſentence on them. It may be they can ſmother their conſciences now for a time; but they will one day reade them a fearfull lecture. I ſpeak not *Vſe* 2.

now onely of those who drown their consciences in their cups, and sear their consciences by their grosse sinnes; but of those who would seem godly and perform good duties, but with hypocriticall hearts and carnall minds. O that they would heare but conscience argue a little in this manner; *To be carnally minded is death*, that is, *is an evident signe of a man that is in the state of death and damnation*: *But*, saith conscience, *I am carnally minded*; or *we are carnally minded*: *Therefore we have an argument about us of death and damnation*. And so also for all other sinnes; There is not a wicked man under heaven but he may argue out of his own miserable estate by his conscience, or he might if it were awaked, as one day it will be.

Vse 3. Thirdly, this may serve for instruction. No matter what opinions men have of us in the world: The question is, What is the judgement of our own consciences upon us? It may be thou art taken for a man of great knowledge and a forward man in godlinesse; it may be the godly dare not judge otherwise of thee:

thee: but the queſtion is, What is the judgement of conſcience? Doth not thy conſcience tell thee thou art but a proud fool, conceited of thy knowledge, and loveſt to heare thy ſelf talk? And ſo for thy performance of good duties, what teſtimony doth conſcience give of the manner of doing of them? The teſtimoniall of conſcience is above all teſtimonials in the world: all the good opinions of the world are not worth a ruſh without this: If conſcience can ſay that in our wayes we ſeek to pleaſe God, and allow not our ſelves in any evil way, this teſtimony is full and ſatisfactory, and onely this. 2. Cor. 1. 12.

Yet further concerning this judiciall witneſſe of conſcience: It is either about things to be done or omitted, or things already done or omitted. The judiciall witneſſe of conſcience about things to be done or omitted is double: 1. To judge out of Gods law whether it be good or evil; 2. To counſel out of our own judgements either to do it or forbear it according as the nature of the action is: If it be good, conſcience will

counsel us to do it; if bad, to forbear it. The judiciall witnesse of conscience about things already done is fourefold: 1. To approve; 2. To absolve; 3. To mislike; 4. To condemne. I begin with the first, the judiciall witnesse of conscience about things to be done or omitted: where I shall consider, first, the Office of conscience in this behalf, *viz.* 1. To judge, 2. To counsel: and then the Adjuncts of conscience in discharging this office.

1. Conscience judgeth.

1. Conscience judgeth of the thing to be done, whether it be good or evil, lawfull or unlawfull. As we try the weight of gold by a pair of balances, so conscience trieth all our actions by Gods word. It is the oracle of God: As the Jews went to Gods oracle to enquire of the Lord, so our conscience is Gods oracle to enquire of and to determine of things whether they be good or evil: It is a judge in the bosome. When the question in Corinth was whether women should be uncovered when they pray, the Apostle sendeth them to conscience for judgement,

ment, *Judge in your ſelves*, ſaith he, *whether it be comely or no*; that is, Put it to the judgement of your own conſciences. So ſay the diſciples to the Jews, *Whether it be better to obey God or man, judge ye*; Put it to your own conſciences. Thus ye ſee it is the office of conſcience to judge of an action to be done whether it be good or bad, lawfull or unlawfull. 1. *Cor.* 11. 13.

2. The ſecond office of conſcience is to counſel for the doing of that which is good and forbearing of that which is evil. This is that faithfull friend in our boſome, that voyce within us & *behind us ſaying*, *This is the way*; *walk in it*. Mark the words there; ye ſee theſe two offices of conſcience. *This is the way*; there is the judgement of conſcience: and *walk in it*; there is the counſel of conſcience. Nay, conſcience doth not onely give good counſel, but if it have leave it will bring arguments to perſwade us to follow it: it will tell us the thing is well-pleaſing to God, of good report, that which will bring peace to our hearts. And 2. Conſcience counſelleth. *Iſai.* 30. 21

so on the contrary, if it be evil, conscience will counsel us to forbear, yea bring arguments to disswade; *O do it not: it will tend to the dishonour of God, and be offensive to others, and wound our souls*, &c. It was conscience that withheld David from killing Saul, and prest him from it by a strong argument, *O he is the Lords anointed.* It was conscience that withheld Joseph from yielding to the enticings of his mistres, and yielded him an argument to disswade him from it, *How shall I do this great wickednesse, and so sinne against God?* It was conscience that disswaded Nehemiah from flying, *Should such a man as I flie?* And if one argument will not serve, conscience will use more.

1. Sam. 24 10.

Neh. 6. 11.

Vse 1. The use of this may be first for Instruction. Hence we learn that naturall men may have a conscience urging to good and restraining from evil. There is no man so evil or ignorant but he hath naturally some light with him by which conscience is set on work to advise and to counsel, and to say, *This is very good; do it: This is very sinfull; for-*

forbear it. This therefore is no ſigne of grace in any man to have his conſcience calling upon him to do good or diſſwading him from evil: The very heathen had ſo according to their light; yea and in many of them it was forcible to reſtrain them from many ſinnes which they were inclined unto. And ſo may many men be put upon many good duties, not for any love or liking of that which is good, but becauſe they would pleaſe and ſatisfie conſcience, which otherwiſe will not ſuffer them to be quiet. It was conſcience that kept Abimelech from defiling Sarah, and yet a carnall man.

Here then a queſtion may be asked, *Obj.* Whether a mere naturall man can avoid ſinne for conſcience ſake.

I anſwer, That this expreſſion, *for conſcience ſake*, may be taken two wayes: either 1. for conſcience of the commandment of God and love to it; and ſo none but Gods children do obey for conſcience ſake: and ſo it is meant when Paul ſpeaketh of *being ſubject for conſcience ſake*, and Peter ſpeaketh of *ſuffering* *Anſw.* *Rom.* 13.5 1. *Pet.* 2. 19.

ing wrong for conscience sake. Or secondly, *for conscience sake,* that is, when conscience it self inforced by fear compelleth one to do a thing or not to do it: As we say, *My conscience will not suffer me.* Thus carnall men come to church for conscience sake, and pray for conscience sake, &c. that is, Their conscience driveth them to these duties, and will not be quiet without they perform them.

Vse 2. Secondly, Sith a mere naturall man may have a conscience stirring him up to good as well as the truly godly, it will not be amisse to give you the difference. The difference is in three things:

1. A godly mans conscience smiteth him and stirreth him very kindly, so that he melteth before God. When David had numbred the people, the text saith, *his heart smote him.* The word signifieth, it smote him kindly, gave him a loving blow, made him spread forth himself before God. A wicked mans conscience giveth him a dead blow, a churlish and sullen blow.

2.Sam.24. 10.

2. A godly mans conscience stirreth him

him reciprocally: He ſtirreth up his conſcience, and his conſcience ſtirreth up him; he ſpeaketh to his conſcience, and his conſcience ſpeaketh to him: The ſtirring is reciprocall. *Commune with your hearts. What haſt thou done, O my ſoul? Thus and thus have I done,* ſaith the ſoul. Whereas a wicked mans conſcience ſpeaketh to him, but he cannot endure to ſpeak to his conſcience: his conſcience ſtirreth him, but he hath no will to ſtirre his conſcience; nay, he doth all he can to keep it quiet: But the godly as his conſcience ſmiteth him ſo he ſmiteth upon his conſcience: *I ſmote upon my thigh*, ſaith Ephraim. The godly, when conſcience ſtirreth them, they ſtirre it and provoke it to ſpeak out all it hath to ſay. *Commune with your own heart, and be ſtill:* They are ſtill to give it full audience, and call upon it to ſpeak on; *What haſt thou more to ſay, Conſcience?*

Pſal.4. 4.

Jer.31.19

3. A godly mans conſcience ſtirreth him to good; and he is reſolved to go to the utmoſt of what conſcience ſtirreth him unto: that with Job, *his con-*

Job 27. 6.

ſcience

science may not reproch him all his days for not following it: Whereas it is otherwise with the wicked.

Vse 3. 3. The third use is this; Seeing conscience is appointed by God to be our guide and our counsellour, it should be our practice in every thing we do to ask counsel of conscience whether we were best do it or no. I say that conscience is Gods oracle: Whatsoever we are to do we should (as David) enquire of Gods oracle, May I go this way to work, or shall I take an other course? *Heare counsel and receive instruction*, saith Salomon, *that thou mayst be wise at thy latter end.* Conscience is a faithfull counsellour; heare it. It is the great mercie of God that thou hast such a privie counsel: Thou canst go nowhere but it is about thee to advise thee. Therefore as Rehoboam said to his green heads, *What counsel give you?* so say thou to thy conscience, *What advise givest thou, Conscience, in this case? my carnall friends counsel me thus and thus; mine own carnall heart and lusts would have me go this way: but, Con-*

1. Sam. 23. 2.

Prov. 19. 20.

science,

ience, what counſell giveſt thou?

4. The fourth uſe is to reprove the cuſtome of moſt men, who with Ahab refuſe the counſel of that one true wholeſome prophet, & have foure hundred other counſellours who will give counſel as they would have it: They regard not this good Michaiah; they ſlight the counſel of conſcience; their luſts and their carnall reaſon and fleſh and bloud are their counſellours; *The counſel of conſcience*, they ſay, *is not good at this time*, as he ſaid of Achitophels: They will heare conſcience at another time, but not now. But take heed; for if you reject the counſel of conſcience, it is becauſe the Lord hath a purpoſe to deſtroy you. *Vſe 4.*

The Adjuncts of conſcience, which ſhew themſelves in the diſcharge of this dutie of judging and counſelling.

THe adjuncts are of two ſorts: 1. ſuch as reſpect conſciences abilitie to diſcharge its duty; 2. ſuch as accompanie conſcience in the diſcharge thereof. *The adjuncts of conſcience.*

Of

Of the former sort are foure:
1. An illightened conscience.
2. An erroneous conscience.
3. A doubting conscience.
4. A scrupulous conscience.

Of the latter sort are two:
1. A faithfull conscience.
2. An unfaithfull conscience.

1. An illightened conscience.

First, the illightened conscience is such a conscience as is in it self rightly informed by Gods law, and doth direct and judge aright in matters both concerning our generall and particular calling, both towards God and towards man. And this illightened conscience is a great blessing of God: 1. because it is the proper effect of the law of God: 2. because it is a very great advantage to a man in the whole course of his life when a mans conscience is illightened to direct him in every case what he is to do.

Use 1. If an illightened conscience be so great a blessing, then be thankfull to God for it if ye have it, and use it as a blessing. Some have it, and use it not as a blessing: The devils have it as a curse;

urſe; many wicked men have it as a urſe: It maketh their ſinnes the greater. Like as a colour, the more light ſhineth pon it the greater it is, green is more reen, and white is more white, and red ore red, &c. So it is with ſinne: the ore light thy conſcience hath the reater is thy ſinne; thy drunkenneſſe is more heinous, and thy ſwearing, and he like, by how much committed a-gainſt more light. Oh therefore make ſe of the light of thy conſcience, as David did: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.* What fol-loweth? *I have ſworn, and I will perform it, to keep thy righteous judgements.* Mark; when his conſcience was il-lightened, he bound himſelf to follow the directions thereof. *Pſal.* 119. 105.

2. Is an illightened conſcience ſuch a bleſſing? O labour to get it; be not without it for a world. Thou wert bet-ter walk blindfold over narrow bridges and planks, better walk in the dark through a place full of downfalls and marl-pits, then walk without a conſci-ence illightened. *He who walketh in the* *Uſe* 2.

darkneſſe

darkneſſe knoweth not whither he goeth John 12. 35. O labour therefore t get a conſcience illightened. It is true a man may have an illightened conſcience and yet go to hell: but this is mo certain; without an illightened conſcience a man cannot go to heaven. An if thy conſcience be ſomething illightened, yet labour for more light. It will prevent many a ſtumble, ſave thee from many a knock. Thou knoweſt not what caſe thou mayeſt be in, what difficult ſtraits thou mayeſt be put unto: if thou haſt not light in thy conſcience to direct thee, what wilt thou do?

II. *An erroneous conſcience.*

2. An erroneous conſcience

SEcondly, an erroneous conſcience is, when conſcience not underſtanding Gods law, or miſapplying it, doth judge amiſſe and direct amiſſe. So Joſephs conſcience for a while was in an errour when Mary was found with child: His conſcience informed him that he muſt either make her a publick example or put her away privily. Here his conſcience erred about this particu-

Matth. 1. 19.

lar

ar untill the Angel had better inform-
ed him. There is a queſtion here rai- *Queſt.*
ſed by Divines, and it is, Whether we
ought to follow conſcience erring or
no? A queſtion very neceſſary to be
handled, partly becauſe of mens igno-
rance in this kind, and partly becauſe of
the frequency of the caſe. I anſwer
thus;

First, we muſt not obey conſcience *Anſ.* 1.
erring or counſelling to that which is
evil; For our errour of conſcience doth
not make the tranſgreſſion of the law
to be no ſinne; though an erroneous
conſcience lead us to tranſgreſſe it.

2. Becauſe the law of God is above
conſcience; and therefore the com-
mandment of Gods law ſtandeth in full
force though conſcience command
contrary to it. Suppoſe a man ſhould
think in his conſcience he might not
take an oath though never ſo lawfully
called thereunto by the magiſtrate and
in never ſo neceſſary a caſe, when as the
word of God commandeth us to ſwear
in truth, in righteouſneſſe, and in judge-
ment; I muſt follow the commandment

of

of God rather then conſcience, becauſe Gods law is above conſcience. 2. Becauſe if I follow my conſcience when it is in an errour, I offend not onely against Gods law but I offend alſo my conſcience: For though for the preſent while conſcience is erroneous it doth not take offenſe, yet when it cometh to ſee its own errour then it will. Therefore this is our firſt anſwer, We muſt not obey conſcience erring, or counſelling to that which is evil. If our conſcience ſhould counſel us to tell a lie to help our neighbour, this is evil and againſt Gods law; and therefore if in doing it we do obey conſcience, we ſinne.

2. Secondly we anſwer, That an erroneous conſcience whatever it commandeth (though the law of God commandeth the clean contrary) yet we cannot diſobey it without ſinne. For this is a conſtant rule, We alwayes ſin when we diſobey conſcience: If conſcience erre not, then in diſobeying it we ſinne double, againſt the law and againſt conſcience: if conſcience do err

and

and we diſobey it, we ſinne too; for though we do not ſinne againſt the law, yet we ſinne againſt conſcience, and ſo againſt the law too; not as though we were bound to obey conſcience when it erreth, and yet we ſinne if we diſobey it.

Thirdly, Albeit it be alwayes a ſinne to diſobey conſcience though it erre, yet it is not alwayes a ſinne to obey conſcience when it erreth. Let us conſider three propoſitions, and you ſhall ſee what I mean. Firſt, If conſcience think that to be commanded which is abſolutely forbidden, or that to be forbidden which is expreſſely commanded, then we ſinne which ſide ſoever we take: As if an ignorant man thinks in his conſcience that he is bound to pray to Saints departed, which thing the Lord hath expreſſely forbidden: if this man do pray unto Saints, he ſinneth, becauſe the Lord hath expreſſely forbid him to do it; if he do not pray unto Saints, he ſinneth too, becauſe his conſcience telleth him he is commanded to pray unto them. The ſecond propoſition is this, If conſcience hold a thing in- 3.

different to do or not to do which yet is not indifferent but abſolutely commanded, then it is alwayes a ſinne not to do it, but it is no ſinne to do it. The third propoſition is this, If conſcience hold a thing neceſſarie which God hath left indifferent, as if a man in conſcience thought that he ought to pray foure times a day (which thing yet God hath left indifferent;) in this he is bound to obey conſcience though it erre. And it is no ſinne to obey conſcience thus erring; though it be a ſinne in conſcience thus to erre.

Vſe 1. The uſe of this is, I. to let us ſee what a ſacred ſovereigne thing a mans conſcience is. It is alwayes a ſinne to diſobey conſcience whether it erre or no, as it is alwayes a ſinne to diſobey God. A man can never go againſt his conſcience but he ſinneth. 1. Becauſe conſcience is our guide: It is our inward and our inſeparable guide; we can never come by any direction but by conſcience; we can never let in the commandment of God but onely by conſcience: and therefore the Lord hath made it a very ſovereigne

thing.

thing. 2. Becauſe we break a commandment through the loyns of a ſinne, when we go againſt conſcience. Ajax light upon a beaſt and ſlew it: his conſcience thought verily it was a man; *Kill it not*, ſaith conſcience, *it is a man*: he goeth againſt his conſcience and killeth it. His conſcience here was in an errour, yet he as truly guilty of murder before God as if he had indeed ſlain a man, becauſe he ſlew a man through the loyns of this beaſt: His bloudy mind looked at a man, and ſmote at a man, and ſlew a man. So when conſcience is erroneous, and thinketh this is a commandment of God; it is not ſo, but he thinketh it ſo in his conſcience; if he do contrary he breaketh a commandment though it be none, becauſe the errour of his conſcience made it one to him. Was not Herod truly guilty of the murder of Chriſt? He thought in his conſcience that Chriſt had been among the infants ſlain at Bethlehem. Thus conſcience is a ſovereigne thing: It is alwayes a ſinne to go againſt it, erre or not erre: and if it be a ſinne to go againſt

conſcience when it erreth, what a ſinne is it to go againſt it when it doth not erre?

Vſe 2. II. This may ſerve for a word of exhortation, to exhort men to beware leſt they ſinne againſt conſcience; eſpecially when conſcience is in the right. Conſcience is as Gods face in a man: when conſcience looketh on thee, the Lord looketh on thee. It is true, the Lord looketh on thee alwayes: but thou mayſt ſee the Lords looking upon thee when conſcience looketh on thee: And therefore thou never ſinneſt againſt conſcience but thou provokeſt the Lord to his face, when not onely God ſeeth thee but thou ſeeſt him. Thy conſcience ſheweth thee the Lord; it preſenteth God before thine eyes, commanding or forbidding, *Wilt thou do the evil now? Wilt thou omit the good duty now?* When conſcience findeth fault thou doſt now provoke the Lord to his face. If it be ſuch a ſinne to ſinne againſt conſcience in an errour, it is much more a ſinne to ſinne againſt conſcience it being in the right. Thus much of a conſcience erring.

Iſa.65.3.

III. *A*

III. *A doubting conſcience.*

A Doubting conſcience is ſuch a conſcience as ſo hangeth in ſuſpenſe that it knoweth not which way to take: it knoweth not which is the ſinne and which not. If it go this way to work, *It may bee I ſhall ſinne,* ſaith conſcience: if that way, *It may be I ſhall ſinne too,* ſaith conſcience. Such a man ſinneth which way ſoever he taketh. The reaſon is this, becauſe he doubteth. *He that doubteth is condemned if he eat,* ſaith the Apoſtle: *for whatſoever is not of faith is ſin.* Suppoſe a man doubteth whether it be lawfull for him to do ſuch a thing, and doubteth alſo whether he may lawfully omit the doing it; in ſuch a caſe whether he do it or not do it he ſinneth becauſe both wayes he doubteth. Yet here theſe rules are very uſefull. 3. A doubting conſcience. *Rom.* 14. 23.

1. *Rule*; When conſcience doubteth on the one part and is reſolved on the other, we muſt refuſe the doubting part and take that wherein we are certain and ſure. As for example; When *Rule* 1.

one doubteth of the lawfulneſſe of playing at cards and dice; he is ſure it is no ſinne not to play, but whether he may lawfully play he doubteth: in this caſe he is bound not to play. So when one doubteth whether it be a ſinne not to call his familie together every day to prayer; Gods miniſters tell him he muſt or he ſinneth: *I doubt of that*, ſaith he. Do you ſo? but you are ſure it is no ſinne to do it: Therefore you are bound to do it, becauſe you are bound to decline the doubtfull part and take that which is certain. And ſo of all other the like particulars.

Rule 2. 2. When conſcience doubteth on both ſides which is the ſinne and which not, then a man ought to do that which is moſt void of offenſe. As for example: Say an Anabaptiſt amongſt us doubteth whether it be a ſinne in him to bring his child to church to be baptized, or a ſinne to refuſe; here his rule is, That that which is moſt void of offenſe, and moſt agreeable to brotherly unity and concord, is to be taken, the balance hanging otherwiſe even; and the argu-

ments

ments to urge both the one or the other ſeeming of like weight, then this muſt be put into the ſcale and reſolve the doubt.

3. It is lawfull to do ſome things when yet our conſcience doubteth of the lawfulneſſe of them. For we muſt conſider there are two kinds of doubting: there is a ſpeculative doubting, and there is a practicall doubting. Speculative doubting is to doubt of the lawfulneſſe of the thing it ſelf to be done: Practicall doubting is to doubt of the lawfulneſſe of the doing of it. Now this latter is not alwayes a ſinne, but the other is: As for example; If a ſervant be commanded of his maſter to attend on him on the Lords day, he knoweth not what his buſineſſe ſhould be, and perhaps doubteth it is not of ſuch moment as to be done on that day; yet he hath no reaſon to deny his attendance: in this caſe though he doubt of the lawfulneſſe of the thing done, yet he need not doubt of the doing of it, becauſe he knoweth not what the buſineſſe is, and hath no reaſon whereby he is able to *Rule 3.*

justifie his refusall. And so much also of a doubting conscience.

IV. *A scrupulous conscience.*

4. A scrupulous conscience

THe difference between a doubting conscience and a scrupulous conscience is this; A doubtfull conscience hangeth in suspense, and doubteth which is the sinne and which is lawfull; but a scrupulous conscience inclineth to the lawfulnesse of the thing to be done, but yet not without many doubts and scruples, because of some difficulties which it hath heard of, and which it knoweth not how to answer or resolve. The rule which here we must go by is this, When we incline to the lawfulnesse of the thing, we should labour to suppresse all difficulties and ambiguities which cause us to doubt. The Apostle includeth this rule in that word *fully*; *Let every man be fully perswaded in his heart*: Get all difficulties removed, all stumblings, and stickings, and hoverings, and scruples taken away.

Quest. But how if that cannot be done? how if we cannot get all scruples removed?

If

If that cannot be done, then it is law- *Anſw.*
full to follow conſcience notwithſtanding the doubts and ſcruples of it. Obſerve that place well, Deut. 13. 1, &c. *Deut.* 13. 1, 2, 3, 4.
the Lord commandeth if a falſe prophet ſhould come amongſt them to draw them from the truth, and ſhould ſhew a ſigne or miracle to confirm his doctrine, and the ſigne ſhould come to paſſe (which might put doubts and ſcruples into their conſciences) nevertheleſſe conſcience inclining to the truth they are bound to ſtand to that: for theſe doubts and ſcruples do not argue a want of faith, but onely a weakneſſe of it.

I. This ſheweth what need we have *Uſe* 1.
to labour to have our conſciences rightly informed. It is a comfortable thing for a Chriſtian to have his conſcience ſo fully illightened as that he can without doubting or ſcruple diſcharge the duties both of his generall and particular calling: And it is a great diſturbance to a Chriſtians mind, when his conſcience is ſo weak and ignorant that he cannot perform his duties without

doubts

doubts and ſcruples whether he is right or no, eſpecially in matters of greateſt moment. It is a great miſery to have our conſciences blind, which ſhould be our guides, and which it is a ſinne to diſobey. This is the reaſon why St Paul doth ſo often ſpeak, *I would not have you ignorant*, 1. Cor. 10. 1. and 11. 3. It is a very great miſery that ones conſcience ſhould be ignorant what to do, what to hold, what to follow: I ſay, it is a lamentable miſerie, that many who have followed the directions of conſcience, ſhould by it be led to death and damnation, to do things contrary to Gods word. What a miſery was it for the Jews to have zeal and not according to knowledge? &c.

Vſe 2. II. This ſhould teach us to uſe the means truly to inform conſcience. *Without knowledge the heart is not good*; *Prov. 29. 1* that is, it is moſt profane. There be three means to get knowledge. 1. Let us pray unto God that he would open our underſtandings; that as he hath given us conſciences to guide us, ſo alſo he would give our guides eyes that they may

Means to get knowledge. 1.

may be able to direct us aright. The truth is, it is God onely that can soundly illighten our conſciences: and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our ſtudying, and reading, and hearing, and conferring will never be able to do it: it is onely in the power of him who made us to do it. *Thy hands have made and faſhioned me: O give me underſtanding, that I may learn thy commandments.* Pſal. 119. 73. He who made our conſciences, he onely can give them this heavenly light of true knowledge and right underſtanding: and therefore let us ſeek earneſtly to him for it. 2. We muſt ſeek it in humility, alwayes ſuſpecting our own knowledge. We are not too confidently and preſumptuouſly to truſt to our own judgement, and deſpiſe or neglect the judgement of others. *The humble God will teach:* Pſal. 25. 9. Pride and ſelf-conceitedneſſe blindeth exceedingly. 3. We muſt ſeek with ſobriety, alwayes contenting our ſelves with that knowledge which is moſt neceſſarie, and not be curious about vain and idle-braind queſtions, or ſolicitous to anſwer every objection

2.

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that

that shall be raised up against the truth. A lover of the truth should not be ready to entertein all objections against it, and never be settled till he can answer all that can be cast in; which will be never. It is not expected that there should be in every man such a ripeness of judgement and such a measure of illumination as that he should be able to dispute with the most learned, or answer every objection that can be raised: But we must with that good Martyr say, *Though I cannot dispute for Christ I can dye for him*: We must be content with our measure, to be wise unto sobriety.

Vse 3. III. Those godly souls that have weak consciences must use them very gently: *Scrupulosi non sunt rigidè tractandi*, Those that are scrupulous are not to be handled rigidly. When a mote is in the eye, it is not boistrously to be dealt withall; that will make it worse. The eye is a tender part, and so is the conscience. Again, we must take heed of offending weak consciences. It may be thou knowest thine own liberty, that thou

Antonius.

thou mayſt do this or that; but thy brother is weak, and he doth not know it to be lawfull: O take heed of giving offenſe: Conſider the Apoſtles words, 1. Cor. 8. 12. *When ye ſinne againſt your brethren, and wound their weak conſciences, ye ſinne againſt Chriſt.* Conſider alſo the practice of the Apoſtle, and the reſolution that he had; *If meat offend my brother, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth*, verſ. 13. It is a grievous offenſe to offend the conſcience of the weak; and therefore beware of it. They are very unchriſtian ſpeeches, *I know mine own liberty: If others be offended, what care I? Why ſhould I prejudice my ſelf for them?* It is true, another mans conſcience cannot abbridge me of my liberty: but yet I in charity ought to ſuſpend the act of my liberty when I know the uſing it will give offenſe to the weak.

IV. To admoniſh our ſelves, if conſcience be ſo tender a thing, to be carefull that we offend not our own conſciences. Conſcience is quickly offended; but it is not ſo ſoon pacified. Every notorious ſtep into evil, or neglect in duty, *Vſe 4.*

ty, offendeth conſcience; and conſcience will keep a grudge a long time, and will give many a ſecret wound, deading the heart to duty, making faith and confidence in God dull: we cannot pray with courage, nor come before God with boldneſſe. *If our hearts condemn us not, we have confidence*, ſaith John. An erroneous conſcience will defile you; a doubting conſcience diſtract you; a ſcrupulous conſcience unſettle you: but above all other, an illightened conſcience, if it have any thing againſt you, will exceedingly diſable you; this ſtabbeth at the heart your confidence towards God. Go then and labour to purge conſcience, elſe conſcience will hinder you; whether you pray, or heare, or receive the Sacrament, &c. it will deprive you of comfort. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the altar: firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* The caſe is greater and more dangerous when conſcience hath ſomething againſt us: there is no of-

1. *John* 3. 21.

Matth 5. 23.

fering

fering will be accepted untill conſcience be ſatisfied. If thou ſhouldeſt be about to pray, and conſcience ſhould ſtand up againſt thee as an adverſary, and tell thee thou haſt been vain, and looſe, and carnall all this day, thou haſt not ſet thy ſelf to keep cloſe to God this day, thou haſt fallen into this and that ſinne this day; thou art not fit to pray till thou haſt reconciled thy ſelf to conſcience: Alas, thy conſcience will ſecretly undermine all thy praying. Firſt, therefore reconcile conſcience by humbling thy ſelf, and breaking thy heart, and reſolving, *I have ſinned, I will do no more.* When conſcience can ſay thy ſorrow, and repentance, and reſolution for new obedience is ſincere, then thou art fit to pray, but not before. So whatever other duty thou goeſt about, be ſure to reconcile conſcience; elſe all will miſcarry.

V. *A faithfull conſcience.*

THus I have expounded the adjuncts of conſcience which ſhew themſelves in the diſcharge of its duty, namely,

namely, such as respect conscience's ability to the doing of it: Which, as ye have heard, are foure: 1. an illightened conscience; 2. an erroneous conscience; 3. a doubting conscience; 4. a scrupulous conscience. Now followeth those which do accompany it in the doing of its duty: And they are two: 1. a faithfull conscience; 2. an unfaithfull conscience.

5. A faithfull conscience.

A faithfull conscience is that which doth alwayes advise and counsel aright when need is. This is a very rare conscience: It is rare to find a conscience every way faithfull. For, to say the truth, conscience is alwayes faithfull in it self; for it knoweth not how to deal deceitfully with any man: but yet we may say, as Solomon, *A faithfull man who can find?* so, *A faithfull conscience who can find?* It is a very rare thing. Not for any deceit that is in conscience it self, but because men commonly would have it unfaithfull; therefore a conscience that will not let men make unfaithfull though they would, such conscience I call a faithfull conscience

Prov. 20. 6

and I ſay it is rare. But ſuch a conſcience there is; and it hath three properties: 1. It is watchfull; 2. It is rigid and ſevere; 3. It is importunate.

1. A faithfull conſcience is watchfull, alwayes awake to apprehend every opportunity of doing and receiving good, or reſiſting evil. As when there is an opportunity to pray, to heare, to ſhew mercy, a faithfull conſcience will remember us of it, and put us upon it; as alſo when there is any opportunity of quickning and edifying our ſelves or others. It was a watchfull conſcience that made David ſay, *I will never forget thy precepts*: that is, I will never omit any opportunity to remember them to do them. It was a watchfull conſcience that made Paul ſay, *I became all things to all men, that by all means I might ſave ſome*; that is, by taking all opportunities and advantages to do good. It was a watchfull conſcience that made Peter ſay, *I will not be negligent to put you alwayes in remembrance of theſe things*; that is, I will neglect no opportunity. Again, a watchfull conſcience taketh notice of

Properties: 1. It is watchfull.

Pſal. 119. 39.

1. *Cor.* 9. 22.

2. *Pet.* 1. 12.

every motion and inclination to evil: it is awake to see when evil is conceived, to tell us of it, to oppose it, and to dissuade us from it: like a watchman on the top of a tower, alwayes awake to see when any danger approcheth. It is Gods minister with eyes on every side, to espie seasons of good, and stirre up to make use of them; and of evil, and give warning to avoid them.

2. It is severe.

2. As a faithfull conscience is watchfull, so also it is rigid and severe. In every cause it delivereth its judgement: nothing can escape its sentence: it will not favour our lusts in any particular. If there be any opportunity of duty to God or man, it maketh us to heare of it; though it be such a duty as none other will call upon us for, or it may be dare not put us in mind of; as of love, and care, and help towards inferiours: yet conscience will: It titheth mint and cumine, and will tell us of the least duty. And so on the other side, it will not swallow the least sinne. As it will not *swallow a camel*, so it will *strain at a gnat*. A faithfull conscience is faithfull

Luke 16. 10.

in

in the leaſt. If David ſinne but in the lap of a garment, conſcience ſmiteth him for it. It made Abraham ſo preciſe to a thread or a ſhoe-latchet; he would not take ſo much as that of the king of Sodom. It made Moſes ſtrict to a very hoof: It made Paul find fault with the Corinthians about their hair: It made Auguſtine condemn himſelf for an apple.

3. As a faithfull conſcience is watchfull and ſevere, ſo alſo it is importunate in all its counſels. It doth not onely deliver its judgement, but doth with importunitie urge the following of its counſel. It will have no nay, but will be obeyed. It leadeth us bound in the ſpirit to do it; as Paul ſaid, *I go bound in the ſpirit.* See how importunate this faithfull conſcience was with the Pſalmiſt: *I will not give ſleep to mine eyes, nor ſlumber to mine eye-lids, untill I find out a place for the Lord.* It will not take any nay, ſay we what we will: ſay we be ſleepie, ſay we be buſie, ſay we be loth and full of excuſes, it will be importunate, and that with vehemencie. It will

3. It is importunate.

Acts 20. 22.

Pſal. 132. 4.

follow a man, if he will not heare it, with a hue and crie of inward checks. It will ſometime promiſe, ſometime threaten, urge us with hope, fear, danger,&c. *As we would be ſaved, we muſt do this*; *As we would eſcape the wrath to come, we muſt forbear that*. Thus importunate is a faithfull conſcience.

Uſe 1. I. We ſee here what a great bleſſing it is to have ſuch a faithfull conſcience, ſuch a faithfull friend in our boſome, which will be carefull to tell us of all our dutie, and perſwade us to it, and of every evil, and diſſwade us from it. It will not flatter us in any thing, but tell us plainly, *This ye ſhould do*; *This ye ſhould not do*. It regardeth not what pleaſeth us; but what is good for us, that it looketh to, and that it perſwadeth to, and that it urgeth. O what a bleſſing is this! This bleſſing had thoſe willing Iſraelites who gave ſo freely and largely towards the building of the tabernacle. The text ſaith, that *their heart ſtirred them up*, and *their ſpirit made them willing*. Mark; *their heart* (that is, their conſcience) *ſtirred them up*;

Exod. 35. 21.

up: Ye have bracelets; offer them, ſaith conſcience: *Ye have ear-rings and jewels,* &c. *part with them too,* ſaith conſcience, *to further this pious work in hand. Their ſpirit made them willing*; their faithfull friend in their boſome, conſcience, overcame them with arguments and ſtrong perſwaſions. This is a great bleſſing, to have ſuch a faithfull conſcience: It will make a man part with all his luſts, pride, ſelf-love, covetouſneſſe, carnall delights, for Gods glorie and our own true good.

II. It is a ſigne that God meaneth well to that man to whom he hath given a faithfull conſcience. O this is an Angel keeper indeed. Did not Chriſt mean well to his church in the Canticles, when he gave her ſuch a conſcience as carried her on wheels unto him? *Or ever I was aware my ſoul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return. Return, return,* ſaith conſcience; and again, *Return, return.* Hath the Lord given thee ſuch an importunate conſcience as will have no nay, will not let thee alone in *Vſe* 2. *Cant.*6.12, 13.

omitting good or committing evil, will not let thee ſlumber and ſleep in ſecuritie, but continually joggeth and awaketh thee: Hath he given thee a ſevere, a preciſe conſcience, that will not favour thee in the leaſt evil? It is a moſt comfortable ſigne that the Lord meaneth well unto thy ſoul.

Vſe 3. III. Labour to be a friend unto conſcience, that it may continue faithfull unto thee. True friends will deal faithfully and plainly one with another, and will be importunate to do one another good: Conſcience will not deal thus with thee unleſſe thou be a friend unto conſcience. Now then are we friends unto conſcience when we do what conſcience requireth. As our Saviour ſaid to the Diſciples, *Ye are my friends if ye do whatever I command you*; So I may ſay of conſcience. For conſcience if it be truly illightened will command nothing but what Chriſt commandeth. If we deal ſo in our conſtant courſe with conſcience, be willing to hearken to it, and be ruled by it, then if we be out of the way now and then, conſcience will

John 15. 14.

be

be true to us, and be importunate with us for our good.

IV. Be ſure thou ſtand not out againſt conſcience when once it is importunate. It is a great ſinne to ſtand out againſt conſcience though it be not importunate; but it is a ſinne a thouſand times greater to ſtand out againſt it when it is importunate. The greateſt ſtanding out againſt conſcience is the greateſt ſinne: it is a ſinne which cometh neareſt that againſt the holy Ghoſt, which accompanied with ſome other adjuncts is the greateſt ſtanding out againſt conſcience. There is no ſinne that doth more harden the heart then to do evil when conſcience is importunate to diſſwade from it. This ſinne was the cauſe why Saul was rejected of God; *I forced my ſelf*, ſaith he: He forced his conſcience; his conſcience was importunate to have him ſtay according to the commandment of God, but he forced himſelf to the contrary. I confeſſe, if conſcience be importunate to the utmoſt, as it is with Gods children, men cannot with any force put it

Vſe 4.

Maxima violatio conſcientiæ eſt maximè peccatum.

1. *Sam.* 13. 12.

by; it will have no nay. Sometimes it is so with the wicked in some particular thing: but often conscience in them is importunate, and yet will suffer it self to be born down. Now to bear conscience down is a very high sinne, and exceedingly hardeneth the heart: therefore take heed of it.

VI. *An Vnfaithfull conscience.*

6. An unfaithfull conscience

THus I have handled a faithfull conscience. The second affection now followeth; which is an Unfaithfull conscience. I do not mean such an one as is overtaken with evil (for the best conscience hath its failings) but such a conscience as so giveth in that it sufferreth a man to forsake God, and to serve the devil and his own lusts: This is an unfaithfull conscience; and it also hath three properties: 1. It is a silent conscience. 2. It is a large conscience. 3. It is a remisse conscience.

Properties thereof;

1, It is silent.

1. A silent conscience, that conscience which knoweth how to judge, how to counsel, how to direct, yet is silent and saith nothing, is an unfaithfull con-

conſcience; that knoweth what duties we ow to God and man, yet putteth us not upon them, nor is importunate for the performance of them; and ſo for ſinnes, what we ought not to do, telleth not of the evil, diſſwadeth not from it, urgeth not arguments to cauſe forbearance; this is an unfaithfull conſcience. It is like to a ſleepy careleſſe coachman, who giveth the horſes the rains, and letteth them runne whither they will: So this unfaithfull conſcience leaveth the rains on a mans neck, and letteth him runne whither he will, into any danger, any miſchief, that he may *do evil with both hands*. Do ye not think Ahabs conſcience was faſt aſleep, which let him ſell himſelf to work wickedneſſe? and ſo Manaſſeh's conſcience? *Mich.7.3.*

2. A large conſcience; which maketh conſcience it may be of ſome great duties, but taketh liberty in other which it counteth leſſer. Thus Doeg's conſcience would not ſuffer him to break his vow, to depart on the ſabbath day; but yet it ſuffered him to accuſe David. Jehu's conſcience made him zealous 2. It is large.

zealous in Gods cauſe againſt the houſe
2. *Kings* 10.29. of Ahab and the prieſts of Baal; but it
ſuffered him to maintein the high places
which Jeroboam had ſet up. Thus Ga-
maliel's conſcience made him ſpeak
well for Paul, and yet continue (it
ſeemeth) in much other evil. This con-
ſcience will reſtrain from great ſtaring
ſinnes, or from ſuch ſinnes as the man
hath no naturall propenſity unto: but
others which ſeem of a lower nature, or
which are ſuitable to a mans particular
deſires, theſe conſcience will ſwallow
without remorſe. As civil people, that
cannot ſwallow down couzenage and
injuſtice, and yet neglect of prayer and
other religious duties never troubleth
them. And ſo ſome profeſſours, who
cannot omit hearing ſermons and talk-
ing of religion, and yet can reſt without
the power thereof.

3. It is remiſſe. 3. It is remiſſe; that is, though it
doth counſel and direct, yet it doth it
with ſuch coldneſſe & remiſſeneſſe that
it is eaſily anſwered and put off. Thus
it was with David. It cannot be thought
but his conſcience ſaid, *Plot not againſt*
Vriah's

riah's life: But he would; and ſo con-
ience let him do it. This conſcience
ill be anſwered with every ſlight and
dle excuſe: As when conſcience tel-
th one, *Your wayes are not good: I wiſh*
ou to repent, and make your peace with
God; it may be the man anſwereth,
ea, ſo I mean to do; but I cannot yet in-
end it: when I have diſpatched ſuch and
ch buſineſſe then I will do it. If conſci-
ce ſpeak again, *Yea, but you were beſt*
do it now; *True*, ſaith he, *I know it, I*
now it. If God would give me repentance
would repent: It is his gift; of my ſelf
cannot do it. Or when it telleth him of
amily-duties, it may be he anſwereth,
have no leiſure; ſo long as I go to God
my ſelf, I hope it will ſerve turn. Or
hen it telleth him of his wickedneſſe,
may be he anſwereth, *Many worſe then*
have found mercy; and I hope ſo ſhall I.
his is the conſcience that letteth a
ans heart ſay, *I ſhall have peace.* Now
onſcience being remiſſe and cold, it is
ſily put off and anſwered with theſe
dle and fooliſh excuſes, or with ſome
ther pretenſes like theſe, and ſo letteth
the

Deut. 29. 19.

the man go and live as before. This co
science is like Eli, which said, *Ye do*
well, my sonnes, but exercised no sev
rity to cause them to do otherwise.

Vse. By this we see the dangerous esta
of those men who have such a conse
ence. There be many who live in man
sinnes, in carnall courses, some in com
pany-keeping and drunkennesse, som
in hatred and variance, some in cham
bering and wantonnesse, some in cove
tousnesse & love of this present world
your consciences no question can say
Ye should do well to be more godly, to lo
more after Christ and after heaven, a
ye should do well to get the truth of s
ving grace; yet it may be they say no
thing or nothing to the purpose in thi
behalf. Therefore is these mens case
dangerous because their consciences ar
so silent and so remisse. They have lo
the most sovereigne remedy, namel
conscience. Conscience is the most so
vereigne means (under God and his ho
ly Spirit) to work repentance in me
that can be; and is it not dangerous t
have it prove traiterous and unfaithful

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What good can the miniſterie of the
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d falſe excuſe or pretenſe which the
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lleth upon you to do what the word
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eaſing unto you: ye take delight in
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ould be too clamourous and importu-
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our ſinnes. It fareth with you as with
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ing to have ſuch a ſilent conſcience;
want the chief means under God of
oing a man good. It was conſcience

that

2. *Kings* 7. 9. that told the lepers, *We do not well ... hold our peace*: It was conscience that never would let the prodigall sonne be quiet till he returned to his father, and said unto him, *I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy sonne*: It is conscience that is the most powerfull means under God to quicken a man up to repentance and obedience; and therefore they are in a miserable case that want this great help.

Quest. But what are the causes why mens consciences be so evil and unfaithfull?

Answ. The causes hereof are chiefly these foure:

1. Ignorance is one cause why a mans conscience is unfaithfull, when we do not labour to have conscience throughly illightened and informed. Who are more careleſſe and negligent of their duties both to God and man? who can with more freedome lye, steal, covet, sinne, &c. then those that are ignorant of the law of God? They know not that they do so much hurt to their own soules as they do. An ignorant mind

mind hath alwayes an evil conſcience. It is impoſſible conſcience ſhould be faithfull where it is not illightened: and hence it cometh to paſſe that conſcience is ſo negligent and unfaithfull, becauſe we have been ſo careleſſe of informing it. Thy conſcience muſt needs be ſilent as long as thou art ignorant. Ignorance is ſoon put to ſilence. 1. *Pet.* 2. 15.

2. A ſecond cauſe is often ſlighting of conſcience. It may be conſcience ſpeaketh not, or but coldly and remiſſely, becauſe when it hath adviſed, and counſelled, and admoniſhed, thou haſt neglected it and diſregarded it from time to time. Though it judge and counſel, yet thou wilt not liſten: Like Caſſandra the propheteſſe, who though her predictions were true and certain, yet were they never believed: ſo though conſcience ſpeaketh true, yet men follow it not; and therefore it becometh ſilent when it is not regarded, but all its counſel, and adviſe, and perſwaſions ſlighted and neglected. Hence, I ſay, it cometh to paſſe that for want of imployment it is ſtill and falleth aſleep, till

the

the time come that it muſt be awaked.

3. The third cauſe is that violence that is often offered unto it. Many times when conſcience perſwadeth to any good duty, or diſſwadeth from any evil courſe, men will do againſt it and withſtand it violently, & put off the wholeſome adviſe of it: hence it cometh to paſſe that conſcience having ſo many injuries offered unto it, beginneth to provide for its own eaſe, and ſo either it is ſilent and ſaith nothing, or elſe is ſoon anſwered and rebuked; as it was with Moſes: When Pharaoh would never hearken unto Moſes, but ſtill fell to excuſes, and at laſt to deny all, he would not let Iſrael go notwithſtanding all that Moſes could urge, but ſaid to Moſes, *Get thee from me; take heed to thy ſelf; ſee my face no more*; Moſes then anſwered, *Thou haſt ſpoken well: I will ſee thy face no more.* So it is with conſcience; When men have been obſtinate, and have refuſed to heare it, and would have it ſpeak no more, *Thou haſt well ſpoken*, ſaith conſcience: *henceforth I will*

Exod. 10. 29.

trouble

trouble you no more, but let you alone to take your courſe: I will adviſe you no more; or if I do I will not be any more importunate.

4. A fourth cauſe is, that men do wilfully ſtop the mouth of conſcience: If it beginneth to ſpeak, preſently they buſie themſelves about other things; or if that will not do, they runne into companie, and there ſpend their time, that the howlings of conſcience may not be heard; and if ſtill it be loud, they ſtrike up the drumme, and ring all the bells, that the voice of it may be utterly drowned: and ſo conſcience at laſt is content to ſtand by, to heare and ſee & ſay nothing. By this means many times it falleth out that thoſe who have had very turbulent and clamourous conſciences not ſuffering them to be quiet, have at laſt tamed them and put them quite to ſilence; or if they do ſpeak, it is ſo coldly and remiſſely that they care not whether they be obeyed or no. Oh theſe are damnable and deviliſh deviſes! Whoever ye be that do thus, ye are in a dangerous

eſtate, ãnd ye carry the brands of hell and damnation upon you. If ever you deſire to avoyd this dangerous eſtate, then ſhun the cauſe: Labour to have your conſcience throughly illightned and informed by the word of God, that it may reade you your duty. A friend that knoweth but little can give but little counſel. Again, give heed evermore to the counſel of conſcience. You know Achitophel took it ill that his counſel was not followed; therefore he made away himſelf in diſpleaſure: So conſcience will take it very ill if its counſel be not followed: it will ſtrangle it ſelf, and ſmother it ſelf; you ſhall hear no more of it. Eſpecially take heed you do not reject conſcience, nor offer violence to it: If you do, you will make it unfaithfull and remiſſe; and then you loſe the beſt means under heaven of your good: Then deadneſſe of ſpirit ſucceedeth, and hardneſſe of heart taketh place, and you deprive your ſouls of all poſſibility of cure. As long as a ſick man hath any poſſibility of cure he is ſtill under hope; but if ever he loſe

that

that he is gone: Conſcience is the poſſibilitie of the ſoul to amendment; and therefore if you dull conſcience, and make conſcience remiſſe and unfaithfull, you take the ready way to deprive your ſelves of all poſſibility of riſing again. Conſider theſe things, and have a care of your conſciences.

And thus we have handled the office of conſcience about things to be done and omitted, with its adjuncts, affections, and properties in that behalf. I come now to conſider the office of conſcience about things already done or omitted, together with the affections of conſcience in the diſcharge of that office.

The office of conſcience about things already done or omitted.

THis hath foure parts: 1. To approve; 2. To abſolve; 3. To miſlike; 4. To condemne, according to the good or evil of our actions or omiſſions. The judgement is not onely of the things, what they are; but whither they tend, and what they will produce.

I. *An approving conscience.*

FIrst, when that which is done is good, conscience approveth it: as Paul saith, *This is our rejoycing, the testimony of our conscience*, 2. Cor. 1. 12. When he had lived uprightly and sincerely, his conscience approved of it: so when he had great sorrow and heavinesse for his brethren, his conscience
Rom. 9. 1. approved it; *my conscience bearing me witnesse*, saith he. So at his latter end we may see how his conscience approved the whole course of his life: *I have*
2. Tim. 4. 7, 8. *finished my course, I have kept the faith*, &c. there is consciences approbation of him: *from henceforth*, saith he, *is laid up for me a crown of righteousnesse*: there is consciences judgement concerning the issue of it. Conscience so approveth every particular good action done by a faithfull man, that by it he may gather a testimony of the uprightnesse of his heart: as Hezekiah; *Remember, Lord, that I have walked uprightly before thee. Hereby we know that we*
1. John 3. 14. *are translated from death to life, because we love*

love the brethren. Mark; Love to Gods children is a ſufficient teſtimony not onely of our uprightneſſe in that particular act, but alſo of the ſimplicity of our hearts in the generall, and that we are tranſlated from death to life. So when good old Simeon had now even finiſhed his dayes, ſee what an approbation his conſcience gave of him; *Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace according to thy word.* His conſcience here gave a threefold bleſſed approbation of him. 1. That he had been Gods faithfull ſervant: *thy ſervant.* 2. That he had walked in the wayes of true peace and comfort: *depart in peace.* 3. That the promiſe of Gods word was his in particular; *according to thy word.* Luke 2.29.

II. *An abſolving conſcience.*

THe ſecond part of the office of conſcience is to abſolve and acquit. Thus Samuel pleading his innocency, had his conſcience teſtifying for him, *Whoſe ox have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?* and his conſcience abſolved him as clear and free from thoſe ſins. 1. Sam. 12. 3.

Thus also Job; *If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherlesse, when I saw my help in the gate; If I rejoyced because my wealth is great; If I have not given my bread to the hungry; or if I have rejoyced at the misery of mine enemie: then let it be thus and thus to me.* His conscience absolved him as clear of those sinnes. Nay, the conscience of a child of God doth not onely absolve him from the guilt of those sinnes which he never committed, but also from the guilt of those sinnes which he hath committed against God or against man. It can tell him he hath truly repented, and truly been humbled, and truly got pardon. Ye know David had committed divers sinnes: yet when he had humbled his soul before God, and obteined pardon, his conscience telleth him as much and absolveth him, Psal. 103. 3. *Blesse the Lord, O my soul,* &c. *who forgiveth all thy sinnes.* Nay, though a child of God have many infirmities dayly and hourly, yet his conscience doth absolve him: *It is no more I that do it,* saith his conscience, *but sinne that dwelleth in me.*

If

If I diſtruſt, it is no more I; for I fight againſt it: if I be overtaken by any weakneſſe, it is no more I; for I laboured againſt it, and do bewail it.

III. *A miſliking conſcience.*

THe third part of conſciences office in things done is to miſlike if we have done ill. There be imperfections in the beſt obedience of Gods deareſt ſervants: *What I do I allow not*, ſaith Paul: His conſcience miſliked ſome thing done by him. But that miſlike of conſcience which now I ſpeak of is of things that are ill done, that is, not done in truth and ſinceritie. Thus it is in all that are not renewed by the holy Ghoſt: The office of their conſcience indeed is to miſlike what they do: When they have prayed, their conſcience can miſlike it, and ſay, *I have not prayed with a heavenly mind, a holy heart*: When they have been at a Sacrament, conſcience can truly miſlike it, and ſay, *I have not been a fit gueſt at Chriſts table*, &c. When they are croſſed and tempted, their conſciences truly miſlike

Rom.7.15.

their carriage, and ſay, *I do not fight and reſiſt, but readily and willingly yield to every invitation to evil.* Do ye not think that Jeroboams conſcience miſliked his altering Gods worſhip, his innovating religion, his making Iſrael to ſinne? do not ye think his conſcience miſliked him for theſe things? Do not ye think that Nabals conſcience miſliked his griping? and Doegs conſcience miſliked his ſlandering? and Paſhurs conſcience miſliked his oppoſing and miſuſing Jeremie? and the old prophets conſcience miſliked his lying? Who would have thought but Balaam ſaid well, *Whatſoever the Lord ſaith unto me that will I ſpeak*, and, *I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do leſſe or more; no, not for Balaks houſe full of gold?* who would have thought but that this was well ſaid? yet his own conſcience could not chooſe but miſlike it, being not ſpoken in ſinceritie. Many a man hath gone for a Chriſtian twentie or thirtie years, and every one liketh him; and yet it may be his conſcience hath diſliked him all the while.

IV. *A condemning conſcience.*

THe fourth part of conſciences office in this behalf is to condemne if we have done evil and contrarie to Gods law. Conſcience hath an office not onely to miſlike us but alſo to condemne us: nay, it will haſten more to condemne us then God. We ſee it in Adam: When Adam had ſinned his conſcience condemned him before God did: he knew he was naked, that he had made his ſoul ſhamefully naked; his conſcience condemned him for an apoſtate before the Lord came to paſſe ſentence upon him. Nay, it condemneth us oftner then God: God will condemne a ſinner but once for all, *viz.* at the laſt day; but conſcience condemneth him many thouſand times before that. Many men and women who do ſeem godly in the worlds eyes, God knoweth how many of them have condemning conſciences in their boſomes, for all their civilities, and formalities, and crying God mercie, and patched-up hopes; many who would ſay that *Gen.* 3. 7.

man

man were uncharitable who ſhould condemn them for ſuch and ſuch, who (it may be) find conſcience within ſo uncharitable, and ſaying plainly, *Ye are ſo*; like the conſcience of Pauls here-
Tit. 3. 11. tick, who is ſaid to be *condemned of himſelf*.

Vſe 1. I. This ſerveth for the praiſe of the juſtice of God: That he may be juſt when he judgeth, the Lord needeth no other witneſſe againſt us but our own conſciences: they make way for the juſt judgement of God. Ye may ſee this in this portion of Scripture which
Rom. 2. 15. we have in hand; wherein is ſhewed both that God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, verſ. 16. *In the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of all men according to my Goſpel:* and then in the verſe going before the Apoſtle ſheweth that now in the mean while every mans conſcience maketh way for this juſt judgement of God; *their conſcience bearing witneſſe, and their thoughts in the mean time accuſing or excuſing one another*. At the laſt day every man ſhall be judged according

cording to his conſcience; a child of God according to his; a carnall man according to his. The Lord ſhall abſolve all his children, and their own conſciences ſhall abſolve them. The Lord ſhall condemn all the reſt, and their own conſciences ſhall condemn them. This is the book that every mans life is ſet down in: Every paſſage of converſation both of the godly and the wicked is recorded dayly in this book: And according to what is written therein will the Lord judge every ſoul at the laſt day, as Rev. 20. 12. *The dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written in the book according to their works.* The Apoſtle there ſpeaketh prophetically, and putteth the paſt time for the future; *they were judged*, that is, they ſhall be judged. So that ye ſee that by the judgement of conſcience way is made for the juſt judgement of God.

II. This ſhould be a means to keep us from ſinne, and to keep us in a holy life: for according to our works ſo will be the evidences of our conſci- *Vſe 2.*

ences,

ences, whether they be good or evil. We had need to take heed what we write in our consciences; for according to what is written there so shall we be judged. Therefore if any sinne standeth upon record in our consciences, we had need get it blotted out by the bloud of Christ. Repent, be humbled, beg for pardon, rest not till thou seest this debt-book conscience crossed, and thy sinnes stand there cancelled and discharged.

THus I have shewed you the offices of conscience about things heretofore done. Now let me shew you the affections of conscience in the discharge of these offices. Ye have heard that conscience hath foure offices in things heretofore done; 1. an office to approve; 2. an office to absolve; 3. an office to dislike; 4. an office to condemne; The two former when we have done well and lived well; then the office of conscience is to approve and absolve: The two latter when we have done ill and lived ill; then the office of conscience is to mislike and to condemne.

Now

Now followeth the affections of conſcience in the diſcharge of theſe offices; and they are foure: 1. A tender conſcience; 2. A ſleepie conſcience; 3. A benumbed conſcience; 4. A ſeared conſcience.

First, a tender conſcience; that is, a conſcience touched with the leaſt ſin, and checking us for the leaſt ſinne; as for vain thoughts, exorbitant paſſions, idle words, and the like. Such was Davids conſcience, which ſmote him for cutting off the lap of Sauls garment. Such was Zaccheus his conſcience, which troubled him for ſuppoſed ſins: *If I have wronged any man*, ſaith he. He did not know; but his conſcience was ſo tender that it made him carefull of *Ifs*. This tender conſcience is a ſingular bleſſing of God: And if we deſire to attein unto it we muſt labour to ſee the odiouſneſſe of ſinne, yea the malignity and exceeding evil there is in the leaſt ſinne: this will make us tender of it. Secondly, we muſt labour to mourn for every ſinne though it ſeem little: this alſo will keep our conſciences tender.

1. A tender conſcience.

1. *Sam.* 24 5.

And

And we have great cause to prise a tender conscience. What got the Bethshemites by not being tender in conscience? They looked into the Ark, and because they durst venture upon it the Lord smote fifty thousand of them at once. What got the man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath for not being tender in conscience? He was stoned to death. Conscience should tender the least commandment of God, and so be tender of the committing the least sin. This conscience is a great blessing.

1. *Sam.* 6. 19. *Numb.* 15. 32,36.

2. A sleepy conscience.

The second affection of conscience is sleepinesse. A sleepy conscience is not so quick in smiting us as it ought: either it checks not, or else with such faintnesse that it worketh not upon us; it maketh us never the more watchfull against sinne. This we see by many who can commit such sinnes without trouble or disquiet as would bring others on their knees and make them walk heavily long after. This sleepy conscience is very dangerous: it maketh men as ready to fall into the same sinne to morrow as to day, and next day as to

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morrow: it letteth them ſee their faults, but amendeth none; becauſe this is ſuch a conſcience as doth not cauſe men to feel the burden of their ſinnes. A man can never come to Chriſt as long as he hath a ſleepy conſcience; becauſe it doth not cauſe ſinne to be burdenſome. They who have this conſcience can ſleep for all it, and eat and drink and be merry for all it: Now a man can never come to Chriſt that is not burdened with his ſinne, that he cannot bear it, cannot be quiet for it, cannot ſleep for it: then Chriſt calleth him, *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will eaſe you.* Matth. 11. 28.

A benumbed conſcience; that is, ſuch a conſcience as is in a deep ſleep. This differs from the former in degree. You know there is a leſſe ſleep, and there is a greater ſleep: There is a leſſe ſleep, when onely the outward ſenſes are bound; and there is a ſleep when the inward ſenſes are bound too. Now a benumbed conſcience is a conſcience that is in a deep ſleep; Preach to it, it mourneth not; cry to it, it liſteneth not: 3. A benumbed conſcience

not: This is a benumbed conscience. Nor the greatnesse of sinne, nor the wrath of God denounced against it can move it. Men can know themselves guilty of such and such sinnes, and yet not lay them to heart: conscience never telleth them about it. Thus the Apostle speaketh of those *who knew the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, yet not onely do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them:* Their consciences though informed, and in some measure knowing the evil of their courses and the severitie of Gods judgement, yet let them go on still, and not onely commit the evil themselves, but delight to see others as bad as themselves. Such are our swearers, and drunkards, and company-keepers, &c. This is a very wretched conscience: the Lord deliver us from it.

Rom. 1. 32.

4. A seared conscience

Fourthly, a seared conscience; that is, such a conscience as speaketh not a jote; *seared with a hot iron*, as the Apostles phrase is, 1. Tim. 4. 2. a senselesse conscience, a past-feeling conscience:

ence: when men can ſwallow down ſinne like drink, oathes, contempt of God, his word, and worſhip, mockage of Gods ſervants, hating to be reformed; ſuch as ſin without any remorſe. This kind of conſcience is in foure ſorts of men: 1. In diſſolute and profligate perſons; who like common ſtrumpets have their ſouls lie open to every ſinne that cometh by. 2. In obſtinate ſinners, ſuch as, like Ahab, have *ſold themſelves to work wickedneſſe in the ſight of the Lord.* 3. In ſcoffers and jeerers; who *ſpeak evil of them who runne not in the ſame exceſſe of riot* with themſelves, and nickname the godly. 4. In Apoſtates and backſliders; who *ſpeak lies through hypocriſie*, and have fallen from the profeſſion of the truth: All theſe men have a conſcience ſeared with a red-hot iron. This is a great judgement of God: greater then this there cannot be: No outward judgement that can fall upon us is like unto it: not the plague, nor ſhame, nor beggery, no nor any curſe beſides hell it ſelf is equall to it. By this the onely means under God

of repentance is taken away. Such may come to repent; but it is a thousand to one if ever they do. It is like a grave-stone lying upon their consciences, which keepeth them under untill the day of judgement: at which time God will awaken their consciences, and then they will be more furious in tormenting then the very devils themselves.

Vse. Ye that are not yet fallen upon this wretched conscience, I beseech you take heed that ye never do. But ye will aske me, *How may we avoid it?* Avoid it? alas, ye may avoid it if ye be carefull: for conscience never seareth it self: If ever it be seared, it is ye your selves that do sear it. Indeed the mind of man may blind its own self; and the heart of man may corrupt its own self; and the affections of man may defile their own selves: but conscience never corrupteth it self, never seareth it self. But you will say, *What must I do to avoid this searing of conscience?*

First, listen to conscience well, that whatever it saith to thee from God thou maist do it. This was the course

of

of the Pſalmiſt; *I will hearken what the Lord God will ſay in me* (ſo ſome tranſlate it.) Heare then and liſten what the Lord God will ſay in thee, what thy conſcience illightened ſaith in thee, and do it.

Secondly, whenever this conſcience is quick follow it. Nothing more ſeareth conſcience then ſuffering quickneings to die. Blow the coles if they do but ſmoke. As the Apoſtle ſaith, *quench not the Spirit*; ſo quench not conſcience.

I have hitherto ſhewed you that every man hath a conſcience, and the reaſons why God hath given us a conſcience, the light that it acteth by, the offices of it, and the affections of it. Now from all theſe proceed two other adjuncts of conſcience: 1. A quiet conſcience; 2. An unquiet conſcience.

A quiet conſcience.

Concerning a quiet conſcience three things are to be conſidered: 1. What a quiet conſcience is; 2. How it differeth from that quiet conſcience

which is in the wicked; 3. The examination whether we have this quiet conscience or no.

I. For the first, What a quiet conscience is; It is that which neither doth nor can accuse us, but giveth an honourable testimony of us in the course of our lives and conversations ever since we were regenerate (I put that in too: for 1. we do not begin to live till we be regenerate, and 2. we can never have a true quiet conscience till then.) Such a quiet conscience had good Obadiah; *I fear the Lord from my youth*, saith his conscience: This was a very honourable testimony that his conscience gave him. Such a quiet conscience had Enoch: *Before his translation he received this testimony, that he pleased God.* Haymo saith, this testimony was the testimony of scripture, Gen. 5. 24. where it is said that he *walked with God.* This is true; but this is not all: The text saith not there was such a testimony *given of him*, but *he had it*: and that *before his translation*; but the testimony of Moses was after his translation:

1. *Kings* 18. 12.

Heb. 11. 5.

Dicente scripturâ, inquit ille.

There-

Therefore it was the teſtimony of his conſcience that bore witneſſe within that he pleaſed God. So that this is a quiet conſcience, which neither doth nor can accuſe us, but giveth an honourable teſtimony of us in the whole courſe of our life and converſation. Now to ſuch a quiet conſcience there be three things neceſſary: 1. Uprightneſſe, 2. Puritie, 3. Aſſurance of Gods love and favour.

Firſt, uprightneſſe is when a man is obedient indeed. Many will be obedient, but they are not obedient indeed, not humbled indeed, not reformed indeed. What it is to be obedient indeed ye may ſee Exod. 23. 22. *But if thou ſhalt indeed obey his voyce, and do all that I ſhall ſpeak*, &c. Mark; that is obedience indeed when we do all that God ſpeaketh, and are obedient in all things. This is an upright conſcience, when the heart is bent to obedience in all things. An example we meet with in Paul; *I have lived in all good conſcience before God untill this day*. His conſcience could not accuſe him of any Acts 23.1.

root of wickednesse and corruption allowed and cherished in him: That is an upright conscience. Hast thou such a conscience as this, *My conscience can truly bear witnesse there is no sinne I favour my self in, allow my self in, but condemne all, strive against all.* Thus David proveth that his conscience was upright; *If I regard iniquitie in my heart, the Lord will not heare my prayer.* The regarding of any iniquity will not stand with uprightnesse.

A second thing required to a true quiet conscience is puritie. Though our heart be upright and stand generally bent to do the Lords will, yet if we be guiltie of some particular sinne this will hinder the quiet of our conscience. 1. Cor. 4. 4. Therefore saith Paul, *I know nothing by my self*; that is, no thing to accuse me; no corruption, no root of unbelief reigning in him: Infirmities he had many, and frailties he had many, and he knew them, but he knew nothing to accuse him. Whatever was amisse in him, his conscience told him he used all holy means against it. If thy conscience

ſcience can truly ſay thus alſo of thee, then haſt thou a truly quiet conſcience.

Thirdly, Aſſurance of Gods love, favour, and pardon. Though we have fallen into great ſinnes, yet our conſciences may have quiet if we can be truly aſſured of Gods love and favour in the pardon of them. The Apoſtle proveth that the *ſacrifices* of the law could not *purge away ſinne*; but onely Chriſts bloud can do it. His argument to prove it is this, Becauſe thoſe ſacrifices could not free a man from *having conſcience of ſinne*; they could not purge the conſcience: but Chriſts bloud can: After aſſurance of pardon in Chriſts bloud conſcience can no more condemne for ſinne, how many or how great ſoever the ſinnes were which have been committed. Theſe are the three things required to a true quiet conſcience. *Heb.* 10.2.

Furthermore a quiet conſcience implieth two things: 1. A calmneſſe of ſpirit: 2. A chearfull, merry and comfortable heart. Theſe two I mean

when I ſpeak of a quiet conſcience.

1. A calmneſſe of ſpirit, or a quietneſſe of mind, not troubled with the burden of ſinne nor the wrath of God, nor terrified with the judgements due unto ſinne. This quietneſſe and calmneſſe of ſpirit is promiſed to all them that truly hearken unto Chriſt and obey him; *Whoſo hearkeneth to me ſhall be quiet from fear of evil.* Prov. 1. 33

2. A chearfull, merry and joyfull heart. When our conſcience giveth a comfortable teſtimonie of us, it cannot but make our hearts joyfull. *This is our rejoycing, the teſtimonie of our conſcience*, ſaith Paul: The comfortable teſtimonie which his conſcience gave of him made him to rejoyce. A wicked man cannot truly rejoyce: no, though he be merrie and joviall and laugh, yet his carnall eſtate is a *ſnare*, he can have no true joy; *but the righteous ſing and rejoyce*, Prov. 29. 6. No mirth like the mirth of a good conſcience. All other joy is but outſide, painted, ſeeming joy: That is onely true joy that is rooted in the comfor- 2. Cor. 1. 12.

table

table teſtimonie of an upright good conſcience, which telleth a man his peace is made with God, and that whether he be in ſickneſſe or in health God loveth him, *whether he live or die he is the Lords*. Thus ye ſee what a quiet conſcience is.

How a quiet conſcience in the godly differeth from the quiet conſcience that is in the wicked.

THe ſecond thing propounded to be conſidered about a quiet conſcience, is, How it differeth from that quiet conſcience which is in the wicked. 1. I confeſſe that the wicked ſeem to have a very quiet conſcience: Many thouſands of carnall people ſeem to live and die in quiet. Look into alehouſes, lewd houſes, into all places; who ſo merrie and brisk, and heartwhole (as they ſay) as they who have no ſaving grace? Yet 2. this quiet conſcience in them muſt needs differ from the quiet conſcience of the children of God. Certainly the Lord will not *give the childrens bread unto dogs*; neither

Job 21.23.

neither will he ſmile upon their ſouls; neither doth he pardon the ſinnes nor accept the perſons of the ungodly: And therefore if they have a quiet conſcience, it muſt needs differ from that in the godly. Muſt not copper needs differ from gold? And we who are the Lords meſſengers muſt teach you the difference: *They ſhall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane.* Now the queſtion is this, Wherein lieth the difference between the quiet conſcience of the righteous and the quiet conſcience of the wicked? *Anſw.* The difference between them lieth in foure things: 1. In the thing it ſelf; 2. In the cauſe; 3. In the effect; 4. In the continuance.

Ezek. 44. 23.

I. In the thing it ſelf. The quiet conſcience in the godly is double; not onely apparentiall and nominall but reall and ſubſtantiall: It is quiet and quiet too, peace and peace too: *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* Mark; *peace* and *peace* too; peace in appearance, and peace in truth and ſubſtance alſo. But the peace and quiet of conſcience

Iſai. 57. 19.

which

which the wicked have is not ſuch peace: It is peace and no peace; peace in appearance, but no peace in truth. Their god is the god of this world, and he perſwadeth them they have peace: But *my God*, ſaith the prophet, ſpeaketh otherwiſe; *There is no peace to the wicked, ſaith my God.* They talk of a good conſcience ſometimes, and boaſt they have a good conſcience; but the truth is, they cannot have true peace within: for, ſaith the prophet, *the wicked is like the troubled ſea which cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt.* So doth a wicked mans conſcience ſecretly caſt up mire and dirt in his face: His peace can onely be outward and apparentiall. *verſ.* 21.

II. There is a difference in the cauſe. The quiet of a good conſcience ariſeth from one cauſe, and the quiet of a bad conſcience ariſeth from another.

1. The quiet of a good conſcience ariſeth from a diſtinct knowledge of the word of God, and of the precepts and promiſes conteined in it: But the quiet of an evil conſcience ariſeth from ignorance:

ignorance: When men know not God nor his holy word, which ſhould bind conſcience, they fear nothing becauſe they ſee nothing; they know not the danger of ſinne: Like a blind man ſtanding before the mouth of a cannon, he feareth no danger becauſe he ſeeth none: ſo carnall men fear not becauſe they know not what cauſe they have to fear. Their very *prayers* that they make are *an abomination to God*, and they know it not: their good duties they do are all like *cockatrices egs*, and they know it not; they know not that they are *in the bond of iniquitie*, in *the ſnare of the devil*. Their conſciences are quiet becauſe they know not what cauſe they have to be otherwiſe. This is one difference; The quiet and peace of a good conſcience ariſeth from light and from knowledge; the quiet and peace of an evil conſcience, from darkneſſe and ignorance.

Heb. 10. 22. 2. The quiet of a good conſcience ariſeth from a due examination of our ſelves by the word, and purging of our conſciences. Conſcience never can be

good

good without purging and ſprinkling; no nor without a due examination: the quiet of a good conſcience ariſeth from this. Whereas the quiet of a wicked mans conſcience ariſeth from want of this: He never examineth his conſcience, but letteth it ſleep till God awake it with horrour. I ſay, a wicked mans conſcience ſleepeth, and that maketh it quiet, and he is not troubled nor moleſted with it. Like a baillif or ſergeant fallen aſleep by the way; the deſperate debtour whom he lieth in wait for may paſſe by him then, and find him very quiet, and not to offer to arreſt him: or like a curſt dog fallen aſleep; a ſtranger may paſſe by him then and not be meddled with: Such like is this quiet evil conſcience.

3. The quiet of a good conſcience ariſeth from a good ground, from the work of Gods Spirit, from true ſaving grace, from righteouſneſſe. Rom. 14. 17. we reade of *righteouſneſſe* and *peace*: True peace of conſcience ariſeth from righteouſneſſe: Whereas the falſe peace of the wicked ariſeth onely from vain

hopes

hopes and conceits; *They are not guilty of such and such great sinnes*; or, *They are not so bad as some others*: As the Pharisee's conscience was quiet; why? *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, no drunkard, extortioner, nor like this publicane.* Or perhaps from this ground their peace ariseth; *The Lord is very mercifull*; and, *The Lord Jesus died for sinners.* Or perhaps this is their plea, *They are good comers to church, They have prayers in their families; They have been professours of Christ Jesus so many yeares:* From hence they dream of peace upon false grounds, whenas *the way of peace they have not known.* When conscience shall be awaked, then it will tell them how they have by flattery deceived their own souls, and that having no true righteousnesse they could have no true peace.

4. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from tenderneſſe and from life. Therefore the Apostle joyneth together *life* and *peace*, Rom. 8. 6. True peace of conscience ariseth from life: whereas the quiet of a wicked con-

science

ſcience ariſeth from ſearedneſſe and benumbedneſſe and deadneſſe, when men being paſt feeling of ſinne are not troubled at the committing of it. Thus ye ſee the ſecond thing wherein the difference lieth, namely in the cauſe.

III. They differ in the effect. Firſt, The effect of the quiet of a good conſcience is comfort and rejoycing: *Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* What followeth? *By whom we have acceſſe by faith, rejoycing*, &c. Mark; The peace of conſcience bringeth forth rejoycing. And ſo in other places *peace* and *joy* are joyned together. But the evil conſcience, though quiet, wanteth this rejoycing. If carnall men had no more mirth then what the quiet and peace of their conſciences doth help them to, they would not be ſo merrie as moſt of them be. Secondly, Another effect of true peace of conſcience is, It ſanctifieth the ſoul, it purgeth the heart, purifieth the life, and reformeth the whole man. It is the inſtrument whereby God ſanctifieth his people more

Rom. 5.1.

Rom. 15. 13.

Gal. 5.22.

1. Thess. 5. 23. more and more: *The God of peace sanctifie you wholly.* Observe the title which the Apostle there giveth unto God when he sanctifieth his people, he calleth him *the God of peace*; he sanctifieth his people by peace: It maketh them think thus, *We must not do thus or thus as others do; we shall lose the peace of our conscience if we do.* This maketh them strive against sinne, denie their own wills and carnall appetites; *If I should not do so I should have no peace.* This peace sanctifieth: But the peace which carnall men seem to have doth not sanctifie the soul: they are never the more holy for the same. Again, another effect of the peace of a good conscience is, to put life into us in the performance of good duties: it maketh us with gladnesse and delight perform the duties of our generall and particular callings: But the false peace of an evil conscience suffereth the wicked to be dead and dull to good duties. The true *peace keepeth* our *hearts* and our *minds:* We should lose our minds in the things of this life, but this peace doth

doth keep them upon God; we ſhould loſe our hearts upon our profits and pleaſures and affairs in the world, but the peace of conſcience doth keep them upon heaven: Phil. 4. 7. *The peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds.* This doth the peace and quiet of a good conſcience: but the quiet of a wicked mans conſcience doth not do thus; it keepeth not his mind in this manner, but it is upon earthly things for all that.

IV. They differ in reſpect of duration and continuauce. The quiet of a good conſcience is ſettled and grounded in the godly; it never faileth them nor forſaketh them: the other peace is fading. Let a feeling ſermon come and rifle carnall men, it taketh away their peace from them; their conſciences then flie in their faces, and then they ſee they are not right: Let loſſe of outward things come & light upon them, or any other affliction, it taketh their peace from them; conſcience then breaketh out upon them and ſheweth them how they have deceived them ſelves

with false peace, especially at their death, then an evil conscience (that hath been quiet before) in stead of comforting will affright and amaze them. But if we have the quiet of a good conscience, it will make us heare the word with comfort, and not be troubled and disquieted by a searching sermon or the threatnings of Gods judgements: Nay, if we be in trouble, this will quiet us; if in affliction, this will comfort us: It will endure all our life, and be present at our death; then especially it will shew it self a friend unto us, in standing by us to chear and refresh us. *Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them*, saith David: nothing shall offend them or take away their peace: it is an eternall and everlasting peace. Thus you have seen how the true and false peace of conscience differ.

Psal. 119. 165.

But here cometh a question to be answered, and it is this; Have all Gods children this peace of conscience? I dare say some of you look for this question, and long to have it answered.

I

I anſwer therefore, No; they have it not alwayes. Job ſeemed one while not to have it: *I have ſinned*, ſaith his conſcience: *what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of men.* David ſeemed one while not to have it: *Mine iniquities are gone over my head as a heavie burden; they are too heavie for me*, Pſal. 38. 4. His ſinnes lay heavie upon his conſcience for a fit. Hezekiah one while ſeemed not to have it: *Behold, for peace I had great bitterneſſe.* And therefore I ſay the children of God have it not alwayes. But let me tell you; They might have it alwayes. 1. It is poſſible they ſhould have it alwayes: Their ſinnes of ignorance and infirmitie do not break the peace of their conſciences: cannot; for if they could, then no man ſhould have true peace of conſcience at any time. Nothing but willing and witting ſins, ſinnes againſt conſcience, can break the peace of conſcience: & as it is poſſible for the children of God to live without theſe, ſo it is poſſible for them alwaies to have peace; yea, they may have dayly more and *Job* 7. 20.

more peace. 2. As it is possible for the children of God alwayes to have peace, so they are commanded to keep their peace alwayes; and it is their own fault if at any time they lose it: *Acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace,* saith Eliphas. So, *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called.* We are not onely commanded to *have peace in our hearts*, but also that it may *rule* there, that no corruption perk over it to hinder it: we are *called* to this peace, and commanded to have it; and therefore as it is a sinne in the commonwealth when one breaketh the peace, so it is a sinne in the spirit to break the peace of conscience: we are all bound to the peace. 3. If the children of God have it not alwayes, then they feel the want of it: and in the want of that comfort nothing else will comfort them. It is not all the peace and prosperitie of the world that can comfort their hearts as long as they have not this peace; not all the mirth in the world can content them untill they enjoy this peace again, the peace and quiet

Job 22. 21.

Col. 3. 15.

quiet of a good conſcience: they faint for it, and long after it, they can have no ſtrength without it; *The Lord will give ſtrength unto his people; the Lord will bleſſe his people with peace.* It is not ſo with corrupt hearts: they can be without peace, and yet never faint; they can eat and drink for all that, and ſleep and be merry for all that, yea and go about their profits and their earthly buſineſſes as roundly as ever for all that: But the children of God if they want the peace of conſcience, they have no ſtrength to do any thing almoſt, they faint till they have it again. 4. The godly alwayes have the ſeeds of it in them: *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſſe for the upright in heart.* Mark; it is ſown in their hearts, and it will ſpring up at one time or other to chear them and to comfort them. As it is with the wicked; they may ſeem now and then to have true peace, but they have the ſeeds of horrour alwayes in them, which will ſprout forth at laſt, and then they ſhall find the worm of an evil conſcience again: ſo on the

Pſal. 29. 11.

Pſal. 97. 11.

contrarie ſide, the godly may ſeem now and then to have no peace, but yet they have alwayes the ſeeds of true peace in them, which will in time ſhew themſelves and ſolace their ſouls for ever. 5. They never want peace as the wicked do want it: The wicked want it, and have no poſſibilitie of having it: they go in ſuch *paths* as wherein they
Iſai. 59. 8. ſhall never *know peace*, ſuch paths as will never lead them unto it: ſtill their conſcience is able to ſay they are not right, they are carnall and not ſpirituall; they know no true peace of conſcience, neither can they: But the children of God walk in ſuch wayes as will bring them to true peace of conſcience ere they have done.

By this ye ſee what a good and quiet conſcience is. It cannot be but that all muſt like it, and wiſh, *O that we had it!* Beloved, let us labour to get it and the aſſurance of it. No bleſſing under heaven is like it: It is a heaven upon earth. Happie are they who can ſhew they have it: and miſerable are they who have it not. *Dulce nomen pacis*, Sweet

and

and pleaſant is the very name of peace, eſpecially of the peace of a good conſcience: If ye have it, no miſery can make you miſerable: and if ye have it not, no happineſſe can make you happie. It is Chriſts legacie which he bequeathed to his Church; *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.* It is glorious and honourable: Beeſt thou never ſo mean in the world, thou art glorious if thou haſt this peace: beeſt thou never ſo deſpiſed and diſgraced among men, thou haſt honour enough if thou haſt this peace: Rom. 2. 10. *To every one that doth good, glory & honour and peace.* Mark how it is accompanied; namely, with glory and honour: But ſhame and confuſion and diſhonour is upon all them that have it not. *John* 14. 27.

III. *Examination, Whether we have a quiet conſcience.*

COncerning a quiet conſcience I propounded three things: 1. What it is; 2. How it differeth from that quiet conſcience that is in the wicked; 3. The examination whether we have this

quiet conſcience yea or no. The two former we have handled already: namely, What a quiet conſcience is; and, How it differeth from that quiet conſcience which is in the wicked. Let us paſſe on now unto the third, namely, to an examination of our ſelves whether we have a true quiet conſcience yea or no.

A quiet good conſcience is ſuch a marvellous bleſſing that it cannot poſſibly be but we muſt like it and wiſh, *O that we had it.* Let us then examine our ſelves and ſee whether we have it or no. Many have peace and quietneſſe (as hath been ſhewed alreadie) ariſing from falſe grounds: they have peace of conſcience becauſe they know not what belongeth to trouble of conſcience; or if they know that a little (as ſome of the wicked do) yet they do not conſider that ſorrow which one day will burſt in upon them and ſink them utterly: Let us trie then our peace by theſe notes.

I. If the quiet of our conſciences be good, it is ſuch as we have carefully ſought for at the mercies of God in the

bloud

bloud of Jeſus Chriſt, when being pinched with the burden of our ſinnes we did fly to the promiſes of God to ſeek comfort, to the bloud of Chriſt to find eaſe and to get aſſurance of Gods favour. If our peace come not this way, it is naught, and we were better to be without it then have it. It may be we ſpeak peace to our ſelves; but doth the Lord ſpeak peace to our conſciences? *I will heare what the Lord will ſpeak: for he ſhall ſpeak peace to his people, and to his ſaints: but let them not turn again to folly* (for that will break all their peace.) O go to God then, and heare whether he ſpeaketh peace to your conſciences; whether it be *God in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf* that ſpeaketh it to you. It is not true peace without we have ſought for it at the throne of grace, without it be peace of Gods making. Now the Lord ſpeaketh peace to his people who come to him for peace three wayes. 1. He ſpeaketh peace to them by his word. This ſpeaking is thus; When the word promiſeth peace to thoſe who walk by ſuch

Pſal. 85. 8.

ſuch a rule, and they walk by that rule, then Gods word ſpeaketh peace to their ſouls. The rule is ſet down Gal. 6. 15. *In Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature:* and then followeth, *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them.*

2. God ſpeaketh peace to his people in their conſciences. This ſpeaking is thus; When the conſcience can ſay, *I am in Chriſt, I am engraffed into Chriſt,* then the Lord ſpeaketh peace by the conſcience, *peace be with you all that are in Chriſt Jeſus:* ſo alſo when the conſcience can ſay, *I hunger after righteouſneſſe, I truly mourn for ſinne, I deſire in all my wayes to pleaſe God.* Thirdly, God ſpeaketh peace by his Spirit. This ſpeaking is thus; When the word hath ſpoken peace by the promiſe, and when the conſcience ſpeaketh, *I am thus and thus qualified, and therefore I have peace,* then the Spirit of God cometh in and witneſſeth, *Yea, you ſay right; peace belongeth unto you indeed, and I ſay Amen to it.* When the Spirit of God doth

1. Pet. 5. 14.

ſay

ſay thus, then the Lord ſpeaketh peace to the ſoul. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.* Peace is the fruit of the Spirit: it ſpeaketh it to the ſoul, breedeth it in the ſoul. Now, beloved, examine your ſelves: Is your peace of this ſtamp? do ye ſeek it of God and get it in the bloud of Chriſt Jeſus? do ye get it by the word, and by your true-ſpeaking conſcience, and by the holy Spirit of God? If ye get it on this wiſe, then it is true peace of conſcience indeed. If ye get it by your own vain hopes and by your good meanings, &c. this peace will not hold alwayes: when your conſciences come to be awaked, your peace will all vaniſh away and be no more. This is the firſt note to try and examine your ſelves by. Gal. 5. 22.

II. If our quiet and peace of conſcience be good, it is accompanied with ſuch a life as is agreeable to the will of God: it avoydeth ſinne, as the thing that diſturbeth the peace. How can any man have true peace of conſcience when his life doth not pleaſe God but provoketh his wrath againſt him? It can-

cannot be that he ſhould have true peace who in his heart doth regard ſinne: *There is no peace to the wicked, ſaith my God.* No, where ever true peace of conſcience doth inhabit, it dwelleth with godlineſſe of life and unblameableneſſe of converſation; as the Apoſtle Peter joyneth them together, 2. Pet. 3. 14. *Wherefore, beloved, ſeeing ye look for ſuch things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without ſpot and blameleſſe.* Mark the words; *In peace, without ſpot and blameleſſe.* If ever we would be found in true peace, we muſt live without ſpot and blameleſſe. A wicked mans conſcience may ſeem to have peace, and tell him he hath ſerved God; *This day I have paid my vowes*, ſaith the conſcience of the whore: but this is a rotten and deceitfull peace. True peace of conſcience is ever accompanied with ſuch a kind of life as is agreeable to the will of God in his word.

Prov. 7. 14.

III. If our peace be good, it will make us endure to heare any point in Gods word with joy and delight. A wicked heart can heare points of mercy and

and comfort with joy: ſo long his peace laſteth: *Every man that calleth upon the name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved; If we confeſſe our ſins, God is juſt to forgive us our ſins; If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous; Whoever ſhall confeſſe that Jeſus is the Sonne of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God:* Such points as theſe a wicked heart can reade with delight (though if they were truly opened and expounded they would yield him cold comfort, yet he can heare them with delight in the lump:) But if a ſearching point or ſome terrible point cometh, he is afraid to heare that. Ahab had a quiet conſcience but onely when Micaiah did preach: Felix had a quiet conſcience no doubt; yet he *trembled* to heare Paul preach of *death* and of *judgement*, Acts 24.25. One would have thought that Paul (a priſoner) ſhould rather have been afraid: but Paul had true peace of conſcience, and therefore he could think and ſpeak of death with great comfort, and of judgement with joy: So could not Felix.

Be-

Beloved, this is a ſtrong ſigne of a falſe peace, when ſome points of Gods word lay us flat and bereave us of our hold. Ye ſhall have many ſay, *O they have ſuch peace, and they have ſuch a good conſcience, as quiet as can be, and as heart-whole as can be*: By and by a ſound ſearching point cometh and ranſacketh them to the quick, and they are gone. I confeſſe they go and get ſome untempered morter or other, and dawb up their conſciences again; but they are gone for the time. This is a ſtrong ſigne of a rotten peace. But a child of God can heare any point, heare of death, of judgement, of any thing conteined in the word, with delight and comfort. It is true, he may be amazed thereat: but he is glad at heart that he heareth it, and will make uſe of it, be it mercy or judgement. Sweet or bitter points all are welcome to him: even the bittereſt points are ſweet to him, becauſe God and he are at peace; and therefore he knoweth there is no news from God but it is good.

IV. If our peace of conſcience be good,

good, it will heal that baſe fearfulneſſe which is in many: who dare not be in the dark, dare not go through a church-yard in the night. Some will quake at the very ſhaking of a leaf, as the wicked in Job: which is nothing but a guiltie conſcience. I grant this fearfulneſſe is naturall to ſome: yet I ſay the true peace of conſcience will cure it. I do not ſay this is a reciprocall ſigne of true peace of conſcience; for many wicked men may be bold enough: but I ſay true peace of conſcience will cure this immoderate fearfulneſſe in the godly. *Job* 15.21.

But here two queſtions are to be asked. I. Whether every true child of God that hath true peace of conſcience can think of death with comfort and be deſirous to die.

Anſw. 1. Peace of conſcience doth not take away naturall fear. It is the nature of every living creature to be very fearfull of death. The Philoſopher calleth death φοβερῶν φοβερώτατον, *the fearfulleſt thing of all fearfull things*. Bildad calleth it *the king of terrours*. Nature loveth *Job* 18.14.

veth its own preſervation; and therefore feareth the deſtruction of it. Peace of conſcience doth not take away all this fear. 2. Beſides, peace of conſcience doth not take away alwayes all degrees of ſlaviſh fear of death. The reaſon is, becauſe peace of conſcience may be weak, mixed with much troubles of conſcience. For as faith may be very imperfect, ſo peace of conſcience may be in ſome very imperfect. Good old Hilarion was very fearfull to die: He cried out to his ſoul when he lay on his death-bed, *O my ſoul, haſt thou ſerved Chriſt theſe foureſcore years, and art thou now afraid to die?* Again, a mans love may be very imperfect. *Perfect love* indeed *caſteth out fear*; but imperfect love doth not. Hezekiah had peace of conſcience: *Remember Lord*, ſaith he, *I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.* Mark; He had the peace of a good conſcience; his conſcience told him he had a ſincere heart, and that his wayes pleaſed God: yet he was afraid to die: I do not think it was onely becauſe he had no iſſue, though

1. John 4. 18.

2. Kings 20. 3.

though that might be ſome reaſon of it. 3. When a child of God is afraid to die, it is not ſo much for love of this life as out of a deſire to be better prepared. This made David cry out, *O ſpare me, that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence and be no more.* And ſo Job; *Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I ſhall not return.* Theſe good men were then ſomething unwilling to die: They might have many reaſons; moſt likely this was one, That they might be better prepared, and more fit and ready for their departure. 4. Some of Gods people; as theſe, Job and David, at other times; I ſay, ſome of Gods people have ſuch marvellous peace with God as that if it were Gods will they had much rather die then live; *I deſire to be diſſolved*, ſaith Paul, *and to be with Chriſt; which is farre better.* It may be in regard of the church, or the care of their children and charge God hath laid on them, they could be content to remain ſtill in the body: nevertheleſſe, they account their ſtate after death

Pſal. 39. 13. *Job* 10. 20, 21. *Phil.* 1. 23.

much better; and, were it put to them whether to die or to live longer here, they would chooſe death rather of the twain. Nay, Elias *requeſted for himſelf that he might die: It is enough, Lord: take away my life.* Not that they love death it ſelf; for death is evil in its own nature, contrary to nature, a badge of ſinne: but for the love they have to and the aſſurance they have of eternall life after death. 5. Nay there is no child of God but may truly be ſaid to love death, aud to love the day of judgement and the appearing of Chriſt Jeſus. Divines uſe to put this as a ſigne of Gods children: Nay, the Apoſtle maketh this as a propertie of Gods children; *to love Chriſts appearing: I have fought a good fight*, ſaith Paul, *I have finiſhed my courſe*: There he telleth us of his own peace; and then he telleth us of his reward: *From henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſſe, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me in that day; and not to me onely, but to them alſo that love his appearing:* that is, to all his children: For all the children of God

1. Kings 19.4.

2. Tim. 4. 8.

God love the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt to judgement. Though all do not deſire it with the ſame ſtrength of faith, yet all deſire it with faith. They believe that Chriſt hath *deſtroyed him that hath the power of death, which is the devil*; they believe Chriſt hath taken away *deaths ſting, which is ſinne, and ſwallowed death up in victory*; and may all ſay, *Thanks be unto God who hath given us victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Neither do they ſo much queſtion this as their faith to believe it; ſaying, *Lord, help our unbelief.* 6. Gods children have good reaſon to do ſo, and to check their own hearts whenever they do otherwiſe. Whenever any diſtruſt cometh, they ſhould check it down again: whenever any fear ariſeth, they ſhould ſay, *What? I fear death: which is a thing ſo precious? Precious in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his Saints. Is death precious, and ſhall I be ſo vain as to fear it?* Thus ye ſee an anſwer to the firſt queſtion, Whether every child of God that hath true peace of conſcience can be deſirous to die.

Heb. 2. 14.

1. Cor. 15. 56, 57.

Pſal. 116. 15.

II. *Quest.* Whether a wicked man that hath no peace of conscience may not be desirous to die too? *Answ.* 1. The horrour of conscience may make a wicked man desirous to die. He may have so much horrour of conscience as that he may think certainly hell cannot be worse: (Hell is infinitely worse; but he may not think so.) Thus Judas was desirous to die, when he went and hanged himself: Thus many in despair do make away themselves. I confesse some in despair may be fearfull to die: as Cain was fearfull to die; it was fear of death made him speak thus unto God, *It shall come to passe that every one that findeth me shall slay me,* Gen. 4. 14. The reason was, because, though he were in despair, yet he was not so sensible of his horrour as Judas was: for Cain could go and build for all this, and train up his children in musick and the like for all this; but Judas was in a case more sensible of his misery. 2. Dolour of pain may make a wicked man desire to die. Thus it was with Saul: Saul had received his

Matth.27. 5.

deaths

deaths wound, and was in moſt grievous pain: he could not die preſently, neither could he live; but lying in very great pain between both, deſired the Amalekite to ſtand upon him and ſlay him, 2. Sam. 10. 9. (though Oſiander think the Amalekite lyed unto David to curry favour with him; but Joſephus and others think he ſpake the truth.) Sure it is, that many wicked wretches, having no peace of conſcience to ſweeten and allay their torments, have been deſirous to die: nay, ſome have haſtened their own death. 3. Malecontentedneſſe, and ſhame, and diſappointment of their aims may alſo make wicked men deſirous to die, and, if death come not ſoon enough of it ſelf, to diſpatch away themſelves with cruel ſelf-murder. Thus it was with Achitophel: when he ſaw his counſel was was not followed he haltered himſelf: He had no peace of conſcience to comfort him againſt all his dumps and diſcontents; and therefore he was deſirous to die. 4. Wicked men, being vexed at ſomething for the preſent,

2. Sam. 17 23.

may ſeem to be deſirous to die; and yet if death ſhould come indeed, they would be of another mind, and be content death ſhould be further off. Nay, Jonas (that ſtrange man of a good man) O for a fit he would be dying, yea that
Jon. 4. 3. he would; *Lord, take my life from me: for it is better for me to die then to live.* I ſuppoſe if God had taken him at his word, he could have wiſhed his words had been in again. But thus it is often in the mouthes of wicked people; *I would I were dead*; and, *I would I were out of the world*: not for any peace of conſcience they have, nor for any deſire of death, but onely for a momentany pang. If they were to die indeed, they would be loth enough to it. Like the man in the Fable: who being wearied with his burden of ſticks, lay down and called for Death; but when Death came indeed to take him, and ſaid, *What ſhall I do, man? thou calledſt me: I pray thee,* ſaid he, *help me up with my burden of ſticks.* When he was to die indeed, then he would rather have his own weariſome burden. It is but a fable; but this

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is the faſhion of many. 5. When wicked men are deſirous to die indeed ſometimes not out of diſcontent or any ſuch like reaſon, yet it cannot be out of any true peace of conſcience: They may go away like lambs, as we ſay; but it is in a fools paradiſe. It may be whileſt they lived they thought to go to heaven; but *when they die, then all their thoughts periſh*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaketh in another caſe.

To return therefore where we left; O beloved, is there any of you that want the peace of a good conſcience? and do ye know what you want? what a great benefit and bleſſing? That ye may ſee this, and fully know it, and by knowing it earneſtly deſire it, conſider

Firſt, That it is the very head of all comforts. A worthie Divine calleth it *Abrahams boſome to the ſoul:* Ye know what a bleſſing it was unto Lazarus to be taken from his ſores into Abrahams boſome: The peace of a good conſcience is like this boſome of Abraham: Who would not gladly lie in it? Such

a man who hath it can never look upon another mans comfort, but a good conſcience will ſay, *Yea, and I have my comfort too.* When Paul was commending of Timothie, ſee how his own conſcience ſpake of himſelf at the ſame time: *He worketh the work of the Lord, as I alſo do.* Mark; his conſcience would be putting in comfort for himſelf: *Doth Timothie work the Lords work? yea, and ſo do I too,* ſaith his conſcience: It is Muſculus his obſervation upon the place.

1. Cor. 16. 10.

Secondly, A quiet conſcience maketh a man to taſt the ſweetneſſe of things heavenly and ſpirituall: It maketh the word to be to him, as to David; *Sweeter then hony, yea then the hony-combe: I have not departed from thy judgements, O Lord,* ſaith he (thus ſaith his conſcience:) now what followeth next? *How ſweet are thy words unto my taſt! yea, ſweeter then hony unto my mouth.* A good conſcience maketh a man taſt ſweetneſſe in prayer, when his conſcience telleth him he prayeth aright; It maketh him taſt ſweetneſſe

Pſal. 119. 103.

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in a Sabbath, when his conſcience telleth him he ſanctifieth it aright: ſo alſo in the ſacrament, when his conſcience can witneſſe he receiveth aright. What is the reaſon ſo few of you taſt ſweetneſſe in theſe things? The reaſon is this; Becauſe ye have not the peace of a good conſcience: It would find ſweetneſſe in every good dutie, in every good word and work.

Thirdly, A good quiet conſcience maketh a man taſt ſweetneſſe in all outward things, in meat, in drink, in ſleep, in the companie of friends: it putteth a *Better* upon a very *morſel*, Prov. 17. 1. Brown bread and a good conſcience, there is a *Better* upon it then upon all the coſtly fare of the wealthie without it. Bernard calleth a good conſcience *a ſoft pillow*: An other calleth it *a dear boſome-friend*: Solomon calleth it *a continuall feaſt*. It maketh a man taſt ſweetneſſe in every outward thing. The healthy man onely can take pleaſure in recreations, walks, meats, ſports, and the like: they yield no comfort to thoſe that are bedrid or ſick, or half-

dead:

dead: But when the conſcience is at peace, the ſoul is all in good health; and ſo all things are enjoyed with ſweetneſſe and comfort.

Fourthly, It ſweetneth evils to a man, as troubles, croſſes, ſorrows, afflictions. If a man have true peace in his conſcience, it comforteth him in them all. When things abroad do diſquiet us, how comfortable is it to have ſomething at home to chear us? ſo when troubles and afflictions without turmoil and vex us and adde ſorrow to ſorrow, then to have peace within, the peace of conſcience, to allay all and quiet all, what a happineſſe is this? When ſickneſſe and death cometh, what will a good conſcience be worth then? Sure more then all the world beſides. If one had all the world, he would then give it for a peaceable conſcience. Nay, what think ye of judgement and the tribunal of Chriſt? Do but think what a good conſcience will be worth then? When Paul was accuſed and hardly thought of by ſome of the Corinthians, this was his com-

fort;

ſort; *I know nothing by my ſelf*, ſaith his conſcience: *I count it a very ſmall thing to be judged of you.* Nay, he goeth further: His conſcience telleth him he *hath the Lord* Jeſus (who juſtifieth him) *to judge him*; he hath a ſweeter Judge then his own conſcience, even his Saviour, to judge him. O there is no created comfort in the world like the comfort of a peaceable conſcience. The heathen Menander could ſay, βροτοῖς ἅπασι συνείδησις θεός, *Conſcience is a little mettie god.* We may not give it ſuch a big title: but this is moſt certain; The conſcience is Gods echo of peace to the ſoul: in life, in death, in judgement it is unſpeakable comfort. 1.Cor.4.3, 4.

Is there any then that want this? Let them above all things labour to get it: it is more worth then all things elſe. Whatever we neglect, let us not neglect this. It is ſafer to neglect bodie, health, means, maintenance, friends, and all that ever we have in the world then to neglect this. The more we have the worſe it is for us, if we have not this. Had we all this worlds good, it *Exhortation.*

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is like a ſtone in a ſerpents head or toads head, or a pearl in an oyſter, no our perfection but our diſeaſe.

Again, you who have a peaceable conſcience, 1. Labour to maintein it. Be often in communion with God be not ſtrangers to him the light o whoſe countenance is the peace of you ſouls. It is the walking with God tha breedeth true peace and preſerveth it. I *Mal. 2.6.* is ſaid of Levi, that *he walked with God in peace.* O let us ſtirre up our ſelves to walk cloſe with God, that ſo we may have peace: No ſweet peace but in ſo doing. 2. We muſt take heed we do not trouble nor diſquiet it, that we do not reſiſt it, or offer violence unto it by committing ſinne againſt the peace o it, but endeavour to maintein the peace of it by obeying the voyce of it. Ge the fear of God, which is wiſdome and to depart from evil, which is true underſtanding: *All her paths are peace,* Prov. 3. 17. We cannot walk in any one path of true wiſedome but we ſhall find in it peace: There is peace in humilitie, and peace in charity, and peace

in

n godlineſſe, and peace in obedience, &c. Break any of theſe things, and e break the peace. Ye heare what an dmirable thing the peace of conſcience is: O then, if ye have it, make uch of it: nay, if ye have it, ye will or certain make much of it. The very aving of it will teach you the worth of , and learn you to priſe it, and make ou above all things unwilling to leave t. And thus much of the firſt, *viz.* a uiet conſcience.

An unquiet conſcience.

I Have already handled a quiet conſcience. I come now to ſpeak of a troubled and unquiet conſcience: Concerning which I ſhall ſhew you three things: 1. What it is; 2. The degrees of it; 3. The difference of the trouble that may be in a good and that may be in a bad conſcience.

I. What a troubled conſcience is. It is a conſcience accuſing for ſinne, and affrighting with apprehenſions of Gods wrath. And here I would have you conſider two things: 1. What are the cauſes What it is

causes of it; 2. Wherein it consist-eth.

First, The causes of it are these five. 1. The guilt of sinne: When a man hath done evil, and his conscience doth know it, then doth the conscience cry guiltie: *when he knoweth it*, saith the text, *then he shall be guilty*. This is it which woundeth and pierceth conscience; this is the sad voyce of conscience. Like Judas; *I have sinned in betraying the innocent bloud*: Like Cain; *My sinne is greater then can be forgiven*. So the brethren of Joseph; *We are guilty*, say they, *concerning our brother*. It is like the head of an arrow sticking in the flesh, or like a dreadfull object continually presenting it self before our eyes: *My sinne is ever before me*, saith David. When we have transgressed Gods law, and our conscience can cry guiltie, when the guilt of sinne lieth upon conscience, this is one cause of the trouble of it.

Lev. 5. 4.

Gen. 42. 21.

Psal 51. 3.

2. Another cause is the apprehension of Gods wrath for sinne: When knowing that we have sinned and offended God, we apprehend his wrath in

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our minds, and behold the revenging eye of his juſtice againſt us. This is a very grievous thing, ſo terrible that no man or angel is able to abide it: As we ſee the kings and potentates, the mighty men of the earth, *call for the mountains to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of God*, Rev. 6. 15, 16. When we have incurred Gods diſpleaſure and our conſciences ſee it, when his anger reſteth upon us and our conſciences feel it, this is another cauſe of the trouble of conſcience.

3. A third cauſe of the trouble of conſcience is the fear of death and of hell: When we know we have offended Gods law, and we know alſo what our ſinnes do deſerve, namely death and judgement and damnation for ever; this doth moſt trouble and diſquiet conſcience, when it faſtneth on the apprehenſion of it. The Apoſtle calleth it *a fearfull looking for of judgement*. When conſcience looketh for nothing elſe but for hell and damnation, this muſt needs trouble conſcience.

4. Another cauſe is privative, want of

of ſupportance; when God doth withhold from conſcience the help of his Spirit. Ye know the Spirit can inable conſcience to undergo all its troubles; the Spirit can prompt it with mercies and the promiſes of God, and hold it up: but when the Lord bereaveth the conſcience of this help, and doth not at all ſupport it, this muſt needs alſo trouble conſcience.

V. When God doth faſten on the conſcience ſuch thoughts as may affright and terrifie it; as thus, *God doth not love me; Chriſt will not own me; I have ſinned, I am a reprobate, paſt hope,* &c. When ſuch thoughts as theſe faſten on the conſcience, it cannot chooſe then but be troubled. Thus I have ſhewed you what are the cauſes of the trouble of conſcience.

Secondly, This trouble of conſcience conſiſteth in two things: Firſt, in want of comfort: It cannot apply to it ſelf neither the promiſes of this life nor of that which is to come. Conſcience crieth, *This belongeth not to me: This mercy, this comfort is not my portion.* Secondly,

condly, In a terrour and anguiſh of mind from theſe three heads: 1. From the guilt of ſin; 2. From the apprehenſion of Gods wrath; 3. From fear of death and of judgement. This is the three-ſtringed whip wherewith conſcience is laſhed. Theſe ye ſhall find upon the conſcience of Adam and Eve, when they had ſinned againſt God. Their conſcience was whipped 1. With the guilt of ſinne; *they ſaw they were naked*, Gen. 3. 7. 2. With the apprehenſion of Gods wrath; *they hid themſelves from the preſence of God*, verſe 8. 3. With the fear of ſome vengeance which they began to look for; *I was afraid*, ſaith Adam, verſe 10. This three-ſtringed whip ye may ſee alſo was upon the conſcience of Cain after he had ſlain his brother: His conſcience was whipt 1. With the guilt of ſinne; *My ſinne is greater then can be forgiven*: 2. With the apprehenſion of Gods wrath; *From thy face, O Lord, am I hid*: 3. With the expectation of death and of judgement; *It ſhall come to paſſe that every one that findeth me ſhall ſlay me*. Thus I have

shewed you what a troubled conscience is.

The degrees of a troubled conscience.

II. THe next thing I promised to shew is the degrees of a troubled conscience. A troubled conscience hath divers degrees: For some consciences are more troubled then other some. 1. The first degree is such a degree as may be in Gods children: and this ariseth not so much from the apprehension of Gods wrath as from the guilt of sinne: Their consciences grieve and are troubled to think that they have sinned and offended the Lord God. Thus we see David could not be at quiet: Although Nathan had told him from God that his sinne was forgiven, yet his conscience still troubled him: *Against thee onely have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*, saith he. I grant the consciences of Gods children are troubled at the apprehension of Gods anger; but then it is his fatherly anger, not the anger of an enemy. Though for a fit they may seem to apprehend that too,

Psal. 51. 4.

yet

yet moſtly it is for that they have provoked their loving Father to anger againſt them. A father may be angry with his child out of love; and ſo the Lord may be with his dear children. *The Lord was angry with me too*, ſaith Moſes, Deut. 1. 37. *O let not my Lord be angry*, ſaith Abraham the father of the faithfull. *O God of hoſts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt. Sometimes the Lord is angry with the prayers of his people; but it is in love, becauſe he would have them pray better, and obey better, and look to their ſtanding better. Now the conſciences of Gods people are very much troubled when the Lord is thus angry with them. Pſal. 80. 4.

2. The ſecond degree of trouble of conſcience is ſuch as is in the wicked, and yet not altogether without hope. The conſcience is troubled, but yet ſo as it conceiveth hope: *God is mercifull*; and, *Chriſt died for poore ſinners*, &c. Thus many a wicked man is troubled and affrighted in conſcience, not for ſinne, but for the wrath of God

againſt it; yet he conceiveth for the preſent that the ſinne is pardonable and may be forgiven: *Chriſt may forgive; God may pardon.* It is indeed but a poore ground of hope & comfort upon poſſibilities: but yet this lightneth the trouble in the mean time, and it may be within a while ſhaketh it quite off: Like the wicked Jews Iſa. 57. 10. who were worried and *wearied* moſt grievouſly; *yet they ſaid not, There is no hope.* There may be much horrour and diſquiet in theſe conſciences for a time: but there is a higher degree yet, a worſe troubled conſcience then this.

3. The third degree of a troubled conſcience is, when it is for the preſent altogether hopeleſſe; ſuch a conſcience as is ſwallowed up in deſpair: when men thinking of their manifold ſinnes, of the direfull wrath of God, of the dreadfull torments of hell for ever, their conſciences make them deſpair of all hope or poſſibilitie of avoyding this; bringing ſuch thoughts as theſe, *What a deal of time have I ſpent in ſinne wherein I might have made my peace with God and*

have prevented all this? What a great and omnipotent God have I offended? What an infinite Judge have I provoked, who is able to revenge himſelf on me, and who will be my foe to eternitie? conſcience alſo bringing in thoughts of the torments and unſufferable pains to be endured in hell, and ſuch ſwallow up in deſpair without all hope for the preſent or the future. Like the wicked man which Eliphaz ſpeaketh of, *He believeth not that he ſhall return out of darkneſſe*, Job 15. 22. So theſe have no hope of eſcaping, expect to periſh as Spira; *O*, ſaith he, *I envy Cain and Judas: I would I were in their caſes: They are damned; but I ſhall be worſe for evermore.* Now though to theſe all hopes be gone for the preſent, yet ſome of theſe troubled conſciences ſcramble up again with vain hopes, and ſome do not. Cain got up again, it ſhould ſeem: but Judas did not. Thoſe that never get up again, either 1. they live in intolerable horrour and vexation of ſpirit, as if they had a devil in them to put them to anguiſh, and often (being weary of their lives)

Deſperatio eſt homicida animæ, *Aug.*

Deſperare eſt in infernum deſcendere, *Iſid.*

lives) do make away themselves, and so leap quick into hell: or else 2. they runne desperately into all abominable courses: Their consciences telling them there is nothing to be expected but damnation, they give themselves desperately to commit sinne with greedinesse, saying with them in Jeremie, *There is no hope; therefore we will walk after our owne devises*, Jer. 18. 12. Or else 3. they grow senseleſſe of it. They see they are wrong, but they are not sensible of it. It may be they pray and reade and heare; but their consciences secretly whisper, *All is to no purpose*. Conscience eateth and eateth like a worm, and they *pine away in their iniquities*, as the prophet speaketh. A kind of sorrow they have, but they cannot mourn; a kind of sad dolour, but they cannot weep: *Ye shall not mone nor weep, but pine away in your sinnes*, saith the text. I confesse there be more presumers in the world, who promise themselves that all shall be well with them: but yet there be despairers too, and very many, whose consciences are troubled

Ezek. 24. 23.

with

with ſecret deſpair; though it may be not apparently to others.

Now the cauſes of theſe deſpairing conſciences are theſe. 1. The greatneſſe of ſinne; when the heart thinketh ſecretly thus, *Certainly the Lord cannot find in his heart to forgive me.* As it was with Cain: When he had lived in earthly-mindedneſſe, and then in formality, and then in diſcontent and in hatred, and then in hardneſſe of heart, the Lord rebuked him, and yet his heart was ſo hard that ſtill he went on in evil; then he murdered his brother; and laſtly he deſpaireth; *My ſinnes are greater*, ſaith his conſcience, *then can be forgiven.* He thought God could not find in his heart to forgive him. So when men ſinne and ſinne, and the Lord doth rebuke them, and yet they do ſinne, and their conſciences do check them, and yet they go on, at laſt they come to have ſecret deſpairs in their heart, that God now will not look towards them; whereas if yet they had a mind to ſtoop to Jeſus Chriſt, they might be forgiven. 2. A ſecond cauſe of deſpairing

Gen. 4.13.

is multitude of temptations. Indeed the godly ſhould not be ſo apt to think themſelves forſaken of God by reaſon of temptations as ſometimes they are: they ſhould rather *count it joy*, as James ſpeaketh, chap. 1. 2. But yet many of the wicked deſpair finally by this means: Becauſe they do ſo often fall into temptations, therefore they conclude they are forſaken of God. 3. Ignorance of Gods word. When the guiltineſſe of ſin meeteth with minds not inſtructed in the doctrine of free grace and reconciliation by Chriſt, this is a cauſe of deſpair. 4. So alſo inured cuſtome of ſinning is another cauſe. When men are often quickned, and grow dead again; then quickned again for a fit, and then hardned again: in the end they fall to deſpair. Theſe and the like are the cauſes of deſpairing conſciences. And thus I have ſhewed alſo the ſecond thing propounded to be handled, namely, the ſundry degrees of troubled conſciences.

III. The third thing is the difference between the troubled conſcience in the godly

godly and in the wicked. The conſciences of Gods children may be troubled, and are many times; and the conſciences of the wicked they are troubled too: now the queſtion is, How do they differ? I anſwer,

1. That trouble in the conſcience of wicked men is accompanied with impenitency, and ſometimes with blaſphemy: *I would I were able to reſiſt God*, ſaith Francis Spira: like thoſe in the Revelation who *blaſphemed God becauſe of their torments*. Sometimes it is accompanied with curſings, as Iſai 8. 21. ſometimes with infinite murmuring. But in Gods children it is not ſo: When their conſcience is troubled, they juſtifie God, and clear God, and give him the glory of all, and ſubmit under his hand, and ſubdue their hearts unto him: as David in his trouble did not fret and murmure againſt God, but ſaith he, *If God have no pleaſure in me, lo, here I am: let him do with me what ſeemeth him good*. So that the trouble of conſcience in the children of God and in the wicked doth much differ in this firſt reſpect

2. Sam. 15. 26.

2. The

2. The trouble of conſcience in the wicked ariſeth onely from the apprehenſion of Gods wrath and fear of judgement for ſinne, not for the ſinne it ſelf and from the love of holineſſe: But that in Gods children ariſeth chiefly for ſinne, and the want of the apprehenſion of Gods love unto them: *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* Pſal. 13. 1. Mark whence the trouble of the Pſalmiſt came: This was his trouble, that God did hide his face.

3. Trouble of conſcience in the wicked never maketh them part with ſinne, never breedeth a hatred of ſin in them; but that in Gods children doth. True it is that a wicked mans troubled conſcience may make him vomit up his ſin, like a dog that vomiteth up his troubleſome meat: but he doth not vomit up his ſtomach to that meat; for when the trouble is over he returneth to his vomit again. So a carnall man returneth to his deadneſſe of heart again, and to his ſecuritie again, when the trouble is over. Pharaoh, whileſt his conſcience

was

was troubled at the ſenſe of Gods judgements, O then ſaith he, *I have ſinned: I pray, Moſes, let me have your prayers; and I will let you go.* If the children of Iſrael could have packed up and departed while this trouble had laſted, they might have been gone. But *when he ſaw there was reſpite, he hardned his heart again.* Exod. 8. 15 Mark; His trouble of conſcience did not make him part with his ſinne: But that in Gods children doth.

4. That in the wicked driveth them from God: They have little heart to come unto him: They ſee nothing but wrath; and they rather go about to ſeek eaſe in other things then to ſeek his favour: as Saul ſought eaſe in muſick, and Cain in building caſtles and cities, and Judas in a deſperate courſe. Their trouble fetcheth them not to God. But the trouble in Gods children worketh otherwiſe: In the midſt of trouble of conſcience they reſt upon God: as Heman crieth, *O Lord God of my ſalvation,* Pſal. 88. 1. in the midſt of the troubles of his ſoul. The eyes of Gods children

children are ſtill towards heaven; they think ſtill they ſhould have ſome help from God: They pray and cry, and though God ſeemeth to neglect them, yet they cannot give over: They will not be beaten off from waiting on God when he will ſpeak comfort to them.

5. That trouble that is in the wicked maketh their heart ſullen: but that in the godly melteth their heart: *My ſoul is like melting wax*, ſaith David in his troubles of conſcience. His ſoul melted before God, and was even poured out before him, Pſal. 22. 13. This is a kindly working. Thus ye ſee the difference.

Vſes.

Vſe 1. 1. BY this we ſee what a miſerable thing it is to have ſuch a troubled conſcience. It is the greateſt miſery that can be: it is even a hell to men here upon earth: it is like a diſmall ghoſt to terrifie the ſoul: it is like a burning furnace in the boſome: it maketh the life bitter. In a word, the ſpirit of man is not able to bear it: *The ſpi-*

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it of man will ſuſtein its infirmities: but a wounded ſpirit who can bear? As long s a mans ſpirit is ſound, it will bear any hing. Some have born agues, feyers, ones, colicks, convulſions, rackings, orturings: as long as a mans ſpirit is ound he is able to bear any of them, all f them: *but a wounded ſpirit who can ear?* Never was there man that was ble to bear a wounded ſpirit. We may ee by many of Gods children how eavy it is: David *rored with the anguiſh* of it: a ſtrange phraſe. Heman was ready even to runne out of his wits with it: *While I ſuffer thy terrours*, ſaith he, *I am diſtracted*, Pſal.88.15. Moſes putteth himſelf into the number, *We are even conſumed by thine anger*, Pſal.90.7. Ethan complaineth that it was like a burning fever: *How long, O Lord, wilt thou hide thy face? for ever? ſhall thy wrath burn like fire?* Pſal. 89. 46. If it be thus with Gods children, what may we think of the wicked? If we could ſearch into the boſomes of ſome wicked men who are enemies to God, then we might ſee and underſtand

Prov. 18. 14.

the

the true weight and burden of this troubled conscience. Cain crieth out of *more then he can bear*. Judas thought to find more ease in hell then in his own heart: So terrible was the torture of his troubled conscience, that he murdered himself, thinking verily that hell could not be worse.

Vse 2. 2. See here what an infinite misery every sinner shall one day be in. Though he be not troubled with this harpye for the present, though he be not yet gastered with this furious hag; yet the day will come when he shall: I say, the time will come when all ye that are wicked shall be haunted with this hellish agony of a troubled conscience; either here before ye die, or when ye die, or at furthest when your souls are departed out of your bodies: This is unavoydable to all that live and continue in sinne. Though for a while ye live in mirth and pleasure and securitie, and conscience letteth you alone; though like Nabal to day ye feast and make merry; yet there is a conscience within you, an Abigail which to morrow

will

will tell you of it, and then your hearts will *die within you and be like ſtones*, as cold and as heavie as a ſtone within you. As Samuel met with Saul, *Becauſe thou haſt forſaken the Lord, the Lord alſo hath forſaken thee:* ſo conſcience will find you out. However for a while ye ſlight and neglect it, or elſe perhaps ſuppreſſe it, yet it will find you out, as Eliah did Ahab, and then ye will ſay as he did, *Haſt thou found me, O mine enemy? yea, I have found thee: Thou haſt ſold thy ſelf to work wickedneſſe in the ſight of the Lord: thou haſt been a profane beaſt, thou haſt run againſt heaven, and againſt God and Chriſt; and thy life hath been full of rebellions*, &c. *now I have found thee out.* The day will come when thy conſcience ſhall be like Jobs meſſenger. Ye know what news the meſſengers brought Job; firſt news of one great evil, and then of another greater, and then of a third worſt of all; cattel and goods taken away, ſervants dead, ſonnes and daughters dead, *I onely am left alive to tell thee*: So, I ſay, the time will come when conſcience ſhall thus

1. Sam. 25. 37.

1 Sam. 15. 26.

1. Kings 21. 20.

thus report, *Thy pleasures are dead; thy profits are dead; thy comforts are dead; thy heart is dead; thy soul is cursed, and must die for ever: and I onely am left alive to tell thee:* And then he shall crie out, *Cursed was I that ever I was born: and cursed be the womb that bare me, and the paps that gave me suck.* Then shalt thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy bodie are consumed, and thy conscience shall say, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor enclined mine ears to them that instructed me.* Such dolefull messages conscience will bring in one day; and then it shall hisse like a snake in thy bosome, *Know now that for all these things thou shalt come to judgement.* And so thy conscience shall bray thee like a fool in a mortar, as it were with a pestill, and it shall pounce thee and beat thee and distresse thee for evermore. This is the moth that getteth into the cloth, and doth eat it: *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquitie, thou makest his beautie to consume away like as when a moth*

Psal. 39. 11.

moth fretteth a garment. This will make thy face gather blackneſſe, and thy ſpirit be overwhelmed for evermore.

I muſt adde another uſe yet: For all this is the law: and untill ye be in Chriſt ye are all under the law, the curſe of it, the rigour of it: And we are bound to tell you how ye ſhall find it if ye do not ſubmit to the righteouſneſſe of Chriſt. But though we do preach the law, yet we do preach it *in the hand of a mediatour*, ſaith Paul, Gal. 3.19. a terrible killing law, but yet in a mercifull hand, in the hand of a mediatour, to drive us to ſeek for mercie: and therefore

The third uſe ſhall be, to call upon you to be humbled, and to ſee that there is no living for you in your ſinnes. Go and ſtoop to Chriſt Jeſus, who onely can purge your guiltie conſciences by his bloud. I beſeech you, conſider, ye who yet abide in your ſinfull eſtates and are yet in the fleſh: I beſeech you, conſider what the event will one day be. If ye will not look out, your conſciences will find you out *Uſe 3.*

at the laſt, and then wo be to you. Your conſciences will make all things grievous and bitter to you, even thoſe things which in themſelves are moſt ſweet and good: When ye heare of heaven, of mercie, of the bloud of Chriſt, theſe will but encreaſe your miſerie: conſcience will ſay, *You have no part in them.* When you heare the word, any promiſe or comfortable paſſage in it, your conſcience will ſay, *Yea, this is my miſerie, I have no ſhare in theſe things.* This will be a hell unto you, and will torment you before your time. This will alſo make all outward good things bitter unto you: When you ſee wife and children and friends, then conſcience will whiſper and ſay, *I ſhall not have theſe long: ere long I ſhall have none but damned companie.* When you ſee your goods, eſtates, and the like, conſcience will mutter, *Alas, ere long I ſhall be in a place where a drop of water ſhall not be afforded me to cool my tongue.* When you ſee the light and other comfortable objects, *O wo is me; I ſhall ſhortly be in a place where I ſhall ſee nothing*

thing but darkneſſe, utter and everlaſting darkneſſe. Conſcience will make your afflictions intolerable, your ſickneſſe intolerable, your death-bed intolerable, the face of death intolerable. I beſeech you, brethren, conſider theſe things, you that have not felt a troubled conſcience untill this houre. Ye hardly know yet what it is: ye will know it to your ſorrow, if you do not conſider it. There is a phraſe in Ezek. 30. 24. where God ſaith he will make Pharaoh *grone with the gronings of a man deadly wounded:* So it will be with you, if you will not hearken and ſubmit to Jeſus Chriſt: conſcience will make you grone with fearfull grones; *O wo is me, I am undone, without hope, without remedie.* Conſider this therefore, and be wiſe, before the things which concern your peace be hidden from you.

And let me the rather exhort you to this in regard of the danger of the times. The Lords wrath is gone out, and his judgements do flie through the earth, and his plagues do fall on every ſide of us: What will your guiltie con- *Exhortation.*

sciences do now? oh you can never endure them. Ye had need of purged consciences now, lest ye be quite comfortlesse in the day of visitation. How miserable is their case who want the peace of conscience in the time of distresse? When troubles and afflictions are without, then how grievous is it to want peace and comfort within? When Gods mortall arrows are in your bodies, then to have the arrow of his wrath sticking in your souls, this will adde sorrow to sorrow, and make your estate much more uncomfortable and unsupportable. Beloved, peace of conscience is good at all times; but it is most precious when calamities fall on us: Then to have the peace of a good conscience that may bring us good news from heaven, that all is well within, all peace there, this is such peace as all the world cannot give nor sell nor buy. Never more need of the peace of
M. M. conscience then now. As one said of the books of faith, *There be abundance of books written of faith: buy them all up*, saith he; *ye will need every one of them*

ere

ere long: So may I ſay of whatever may forward the peace of conſcience; Buy it, purchaſe it, get it, as much peace as you can poſſible: ye will have need of it all ere long. Take heed of troubling your conſciences or clogging them with guilt, leſt the Lord caſt you off, and leſt ye be hardned, and ſo ye periſh from the right way. Do not think thus, *O we are believers, and have no need of ſuch threatnings.* He who is certain of his ſalvation knoweth aſſuredly he ſhould be damned if he ſhould go on in ſinne without repentance; This *If* is true enough; *If the righteous forſake his righteouſneſſe, all his former righteouſneſſe ſhall be forgotten.* Ezek. 18. 26. And, *Wo is me,* ſaith Paul, *if I preach not the goſpel.* 1. Cor. 9. 16. In the ſtate of innocencie there was uſe of threatnings: ſo is there now in the ſtate of grace. The Lord threatned Adam in innocencie, *If thou eat thereof thou ſhalt die the death.* Job was awed by threatnings not to lift up his hand againſt the fatherleſſe; *for,* ſaith he, *deſtruction from God was a terrour to me.* Job 31. 23. *My fleſh,* ſaith David, *trembleth*

Psal. 119. 120. bleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements. Let us have grace, saith

Heb. 12. 28. the Apostle, *whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* Why? *for our God is a consuming fire.* For be it that Gods children (that is, all believers) shall never fall finally away; yet this threatning is one of Christs instruments whereby he keepeth them from falling: and they also may tast of much bitternesse if they grow indulgent to their corruptions. O therefore take heed of this curse, that your consciences may not dog you with the guilt of sinne and the apprehension of Gods wrath. You will never be able to bear it, much lesse in the time of affliction. O it is good being in a drie house when a great tempest is up: and it is safe being in a good harbour when a storm beateth hard. A good conscience is good at all times; but O how sweet then! When Jonah fell into affliction, the want of peace in his conscience made him look upon his affliction as upon hell, as though he had been in the belly of hell: *They who*

follow

follow lying vanities, forſake their own mercies, ſaith he. Mark; his conſcience dogged him with his fleeing from God, and forſaking his own mercies. Ye ſee he was miſerably diſtreſſed by it till the Lord did deliver him. Be charie then of conſcience, and get it purged, that it may ſpeak peace to you in trouble.

4 *Queſtions.*

NOw I have declared unto you, What a troubled conſcience is; What is the cauſe of it, and wherein it conſiſteth; How many degrees there be of it; How the troubled conſcience of the godly differeth from the troubled conſcience of the wicked; the miſerie of a troubled conſcience; and, What a deal of miſchief it doth one, eſpecially in affliction: now I ſhould leave this point, but that there be ſundrie queſtions to be anſwered about it.

I. Suppoſe a man be rid of this trouble, and have peace of conſcience, how ſhall he maintein it, and keep out troubles from it?

II. Whether and how the peace of our conſcience dependeth upon our care and obedience?

III. What manner of obedience it is that peace of conſcience doth depend on?

IV. If a man have no peace, but onely a burdened conſcience, what muſt ſuch a man do to be freed from it and to attein true peace?

I. Queſtion; *How a man may keep peace of conſcience.*

I begin with the firſt: Suppoſe a man have peace of conſcience, what muſt he do to keep and maintein it? I anſwer,

Firſt, We muſt labour to prevent troubles of conſcience by taking heed that we do nothing contrarie to conſcience. We muſt not be drawn by friendſhip, or credit, or the love of any luſt, to do that which conſcience forbiddeth. Nothing ſhould be ſo dear unto us as the peace of conſcience: nothing for the love of it ſhould make us do ought againſt our conſcience. How miſerable

are

are thoſe comforts, delights, ſatisfactions which we get to our ſelves in ſuch courſes as our own hearts do condemn! However they ſeem comforts for a while, and contentments for a while, and delights for a while, yet at laſt it will appear that miſerable comforts are they all. Nothing that we get in any evil way will chear and comfort us in a time of need. What ſaid Francis Spira at the time of his death, when ſeeing his wife and children about him, and thinking on the goods and eſtate which he had got for them by denying the truth which he had before mainteined againſt the Romiſh errours, he cried out in the horrour of his conſcience, *How terrible is the ſight of theſe unto me!* However before they had been comforts to him, yet now he could not endure the ſight of them. *O*, thought he, *I recanted for your ſake; I yielded to ſuperſtition, and it was long of you:* Therefore he abhorred now the ſight of them. Wretched is he that alloweth himſelf in any courſe which his conſcience findeth fault with. It is a

good

Rom. 14. 22. good rule the Apostle giveth, *Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth:* that is, Blessed is he that hath not a condemning conscience, that alloweth not himself in any course wherein his conscience doth condemne him. So that if we have peace of conscience, and desire to maintein it, let us never allow our selves in any course that our conscience may condemne us in. That is the first answer.

Answ. 2 Secondly, If we will maintein our peace, we must labour to have our hearts grounded in the assurance of the love of God: alas, it will fail us else, and leave us in trouble and perplexitie in time of greatest need. Observe how the Apostle joyneth love and peace together, 2. Cor. 13. 11. *The God of love and peace be with you.* If he be the God of love to us, it is sure enough he will be the God of peace also: If we know once that God loveth us, then we may set our hearts at rest: As long as we doubt of his love our conscience can never have true peace: And therefore if we would maintein

true

true peace of conſcience let us labour to be aſſured of Gods love.

Thirdly, We muſt uſe the exerciſe of faith in applying the bloud of Chriſt; we muſt labour to purge and cleanſe our conſciences with it. If we find that we have ſinned, we muſt runne preſently to the bloud of Chriſt to waſh away our ſinne. We muſt not let the wound feſter or exulcerate, but preſently get it healed. As there is a fountain of ſinne in us, ſo there is a fountain of mercie in Chriſt, *ſet open for Iudah and Ieruſalem*, and for every poore ſoul to waſh in. As we ſinne dayly, ſo he juſtifieth dayly, and we muſt dayly go to him for it: As every day we runne into new debts, ſo the Lords prayer teacheth us every day to beg forgiveneſſe: We muſt every day eye the brazen ſerpent. Juſtification is an ever-running fountain, and therefore we cannot look to have all the water at once. A fountain ever runneth anew; ſo juſtification ever floweth anew, and we muſt go to it. Chriſt is a *Prieſt for ever after the order of Melchiſedec*. O let us ſue out every day

Anſw. 3. *Zech.* 13. 1.

day a dayly pardon of courſe! Let us not ſleep one night without a new pardon. Better ſleep in a houſe full of adders and venemous beaſts then ſleep in one ſin. O then be ſure with the day to clear the ſinnes of the day: Then ſhall our conſcience have true peace. But how if I have relapſed? what ſhall I do then? I anſwer, Every man that falleth doth not fall on all foure, as we uſe to ſay; he doth not fall quite: There be degrees of falling. As in a ſick man, though he be ill yet he is not by and by dead; ſome life remaineth ſtill, which will look out towards health again: ſo there is ſo much life in juſtification as to recover thee again. Be conſtant therefore in this courſe: Ever go to Chriſt, ever waſh in this fountain, ever bring thy ſoul hither to be cleanſed; and then thy conſcience ever ſhall have peace.

Object.

Sol.

Anſw. 4. Fourthly, If we would maintein our peace, then let us labour to be conſtant in obedience to Jeſus Chriſt. *Whoſoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the word of God perfected; and hereby know*

we

we that we are in him, 1. John 2.5. Mark; Hereby our conſcience may tell us that we are right, and ſpeak peace to us, if we *keep his word.*

II. Queſtion; *How the peace of our conſcience doth depend upon our care and our obedience.*

The reaſon why I raiſe this queſtion is this, Becauſe as our juſtification is onely in Chriſt, ſo our peace is onely in him; how then doth the peace of our conſcience depend on obedience? The place of ſcripture that occaſioneth the doubt is, 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The anſwer of a good conſcience towards God by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.* It is by Chriſt; how dependeth it then on our obedience?

Anſw. 1. A good conſcience doth not depend upon our obedience as the principall cauſe of it, but upon juſtification which we have by Chriſt if we be in him: Rom. 5. 1. *Being juſtified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Ye ſee then that our peace is grounded upon our juſtification as the

principall

principall cause of it. If we should seek for peace from our works and obedience, alas, they are sinfull and defective; there is no peace to be found in them: Our conscience would be troubled at our best duties, at our weakness in prayer, our frailties in hearing, our slips in every holy service: There is nothing we do but our conscience might find fault with it, and pick a hole in it; and therefore we had need to flie unto Christ for true peace. No wonder then that Papists have not true peace, but professedly say that every man must doubt, and no man can be sure of his salvation. They must needs doubt indeed who trust to their own works: which can never bring true peace. The conscience must ever be quarrelling and finding of fault, and be without peace, if we trust to the best works. So that this is the first answer, All true peace dependeth upon justification by faith in Christ as the principall cause.

Secondly, We answer, That our peace dependeth upon our obedience

in

in this ſort, that we can have no peace except we be given to obedience. Thoſe men that can ſinne and yet be in peace, were never juſtified in their lives. A child of God when he ſinneth; as for example, if he ſhould be tempted to lie, or to omit a good dutie, which he knoweth he is bound to perform; yet this would much trouble his conſcience; his ſoul would be aſhamed, his heart perplexed, he would not know how to look the Lord in the face; *I have ſinned: what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of men?* When David had ſinned againſt God, *I am troubled*, ſaith he; *and I go mourning all the day long*. And therefore peace of conſcience doth depend thus farre on obedience, as that a man cannot have peace unleſſe he be obedient, and take heed of ſinne, and labour in all things to be upright before God. Now if you ask me, But how doth our peace depend upon our obedience? I anſwer, It dependeth upon obedience as the removing cauſe: It removeth that which would hinder our peace. Sinne would interrupt our peace: *Pſal.* 38. 6.

Dub.

Sol.

peace: now obedience removeth sinne. To this purpose the Apostle speaketh 1. John 3. 18, 19. *My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth: For hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before God:* Hereby we shall assure our consciences that we are in him, if we take heed of hypocrisie: If we love in truth, and be obedient in truth, we shall thereby remove all our doubts and our fears, our troubles and perplexities of conscience. So that peace doth depend on obedience as the removing cause: It removeth that which otherwise would hinder peace. This is the first. Again, our peace of conscience dependeth upon our obedience as the witnessing cause of it. Obedience is one of the witnesses of true peace; it witnesseth that we have peace with God. 2. Cor. 1. 12. *This is our rejoycing, even the testimonie of our conscience, that in simplicitie and godly sinceritie we have had our conversation in the world.* See here, it is the witnessing cause of it: Paul had peace of conscience; his con-

science

ſcience was able to make him rejoyce: How? Becauſe it gave teſtimony that his converſation was godly and ſimple and gracious. Though we be in Chriſt, yet we can have no peace unleſſe holy obedience doth witneſſe the ſame. Obedience is not the cauſe of the peace of our conſciences before God, but it is the cauſe of our perceiving the ſame: We know we have peace by reaſon of our obedience: We know that *every one that doeth righteouſneſſe is born of God:* 1. *John* 2. 29. *We know we are paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren: Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, by the ſpirit that he hath given us.* 1. *John* 3. 14. 1. *John* 4. 13. Mark; we come to know it by obedience and by the fruits of obedience. Take away obedience, we can never know peace. *They that walk by this rule, peace ſhall be upon them and upon the Iſrael of God,* ſaith the Apoſtle. *Gal.* 6. 16. Thirdly, our peace of conſcience dependeth on our obedience as the confirming cauſe: Chriſt confirmeth our peace to us by making us walk cloſe to him and obedient unto him. Paul ſheweth how it preſerveth peace,

as a shoe preserveth the foot: ye know if we should walk without shoes, barefoot, our feet would be in danger of pricking and hurting. So doth obedience to the Gospel preserve our peace: *Ephes.* 6. 15. *Stand,* saith the Apostle, *having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.* Mark; he compareth it to a shoe, which he would have us shod with; and then it will be the Gospel of peace to us, and our peace shall be in safety. Fourthly, our peace dependeth upon our obedience, not onely as a signe of true peace, nor onely as a guard to it, but as a thing pleasing to God, without the which we displease God. For though God be pleased with his children alwayes in Christ, yet he is not pleased that any in Christ should be disobedient to him. *1. Thess.* 4. 1. *Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God,* saith the Apostle. When Gods children walk in obedience, that is pleasing unto God. So that peace of conscience doth greatly depend on obedience: For otherwise conscience will be troubled; *O I do not please God; This is displeasing*

unto

unto God; and, *This doth provoke God.* Not as though there were any ſuch perfection in our obedience that can ſatisfie any tittle of Gods law; but becauſe when our perſons are pleaſing to God in Jeſus Chriſt, then our obedience to God is pleaſing too in Jeſus Chriſt, and conſcience will ſay it. Thus much ſhall ſuffice for anſwer to the ſecond queſtion.

III. Queſtion; *What manner of obedience it is that peace of conſcience dependeth upon?*

The reaſon of this queſtion is this; Becauſe it ſhould ſeem there is no ſuch obedience in this life as any peace of conſcience ſhould depend on. Doth not James ſay, *In many things we ſinne all.*? Doth not our Saviour ſay, *When ye have done all that ye can, ſay, We are unprofitable ſervants.*? If our conſcience can ſtill ſay that we are unprofitable, and that we do ſinne in every thing that we do, yea in many things, in all the duties we go about; if our conſciences can ſay thus, How can any peace depend

upon obedience? What obedience do you mean that peace of conscience dependeth upon?

I answer, 1. Absolute perfection in obedience is not required unto evangelicall peace. For if it were, no man could have peace; no not Paul, nor Abraham, nor any of the holiest of Gods children: and therefore absolute perfection is not required. *If we say we have not sinned, we make Christ a liar, and his word is not in us*, 1. John 1. 10. Our conscience can still say we have sinned; and it can still say our obedience is imperfect: A halting leg can never go perfectly. A Jacob is called he that halteth; and every godly soul halteth: Though he do not halt between two, as wicked people do, yet he halteth in following after God. What purblind eye can see perfectly? or thick eare heare perfectly? He that hath these imperfections of body can neither go nor see nor heare perfectly: So the best of Gods children have imperfections of heart and spirit and mind: their faith is imperfect, their love is imperfect; and therefore their obedience must

muſt needs be imperfect. But abſolute perfection is not required to true peace of conſcience; and therefore this doth not hinder it. 2. Though abſolute perfection be not required to peace, yet ſuch obedience is required as may be acceptable to God. So ſaith the Apoſtle, *We labour that whether preſent or abſent we may be accepted of him.* Such obedience we muſt ſhew as may be accepted of him, or we cannot have true peace. If our endevours be not acceptable, our conſcience will quickly heare of it, and tell us ſo: If we pray coldly, or heare unprofitably, or live looſely, if we do not do that which is acceptable to God, our conſciences will ſoon complain. Nay though we do do the duties, if we do not do them in an acceptable manner, conſcience will have matter againſt us ſtill. 3. This acceptableneſſe of obedience lieth in this, when our obedience is ſincere, univerſall, and totall, and proceeding from the ſpirit of Chriſt Jeſus dwelling in us. The Apoſtle giveth it this phraſe, *When we walk not after the fleſh but after the Spirit,* 2. Cor. 5. 9.

Rom.8.4. That is our fulfilling the law, when Christ hath fulfilled the law for us, and maketh us sincerely to walk by it, not after the flesh but after the Spirit: when we do not favour our selves in one lust, nor suffer our selves in any beloved sinne; but whatever it be that is evil, our conscience can say we truly do hate it and labour to avoid it; whatever it be that is commanded us, be it never so contrary to our nature, yet our conscience can say we sincerely set our selves to do it. So walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, this is sincerity of obedience, and this is required unto peace. 4. This sincerity of obedience maketh us to bewail our very infirmities, and to be humbled for them: not onely to be humbled for greater sinnes, but also to be humbled for our infirmities. If we be not soundly humbled for our very infirmities also, they will hinder the peace of our conscience: We can have no peace except our conscience can witnesse that our infirmities do humble us and drive us to Christ and cause us to sue out a pardon. If conscience

ence have not a pardon ſealed for infirmities alſo, it will not be at peace, Chriſt bare our very infirmities: therefore we muſt be humbled for them, and go to him for pardon of them too, or conſcience will not be at peace. Thus I have anſwered alſo this third queſtion. *Matth.* 8. 17.

IV. Queſtion; *How if a man have a burdened and troubled conſcience, what muſt he do to be freed from it?*

The reaſon of this queſtion is this; Becauſe men are ignorant about it. When men are troubled in conſcience and burdened a little that way, preſently they daub all with peace, and go a wrong way to work. This courſe the Lord doth complain of in the falſe prophets who preached too much peace; *They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people ſlightly, ſaying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* And ſo they do more hurt then good: Like a chirurgion that skinneth the wound before he giveth ſearching ſalves to kill the matter of it: afterwards it breaketh out *Jer.* 8. 11.

worse, and it is a hundred to one but it will cost the patient his life: So it is with many men: A man cannot rore a little for his sinnes, *I have been a sinner, and what shall I do? I have been a beast,* &c. But, *O*, say they, *believe man, Christ died for thee, and the promise is to thee, and God will pardon thee.* Thus they heal him slightly with *Peace, peace,* and it may be there is no peace to him yet; he had need to be searched more deeply: they skinne the wound, and it is a thousand to one but it loseth the mans soul, by giving a cordiall where a corrosive was necessarie. And therefore great reason that this question should be answered, If a man have a burdened troubled conscience, what must such a man do to be freed from it?

I answer, 1. Let him take heed that he meddle not too much with the secret will of God, what his decree and purpose is from eternitie. As soon as an arrow is shot into the conscience, & the conscience cometh to be humbled, commonly the heart layeth about it, *And how if God have reprobated me? and what*

if he have appointed me to wrath? how then? Beloved, ye muſt take heed of this: If your hearts faſten upon reprobation, that will marre all; that will quite diſcourage a poore ſoul from going to God.

2. Underſtand the word right. Do not think that becauſe God hath not in particular named thee, therefore he hath excluded thee. Gods promiſes are made in generall to all that believe; and they are to be applyed in particular to all them that believe: why then ſhouldſt thou exclude thy ſelf when God doth not exclude thee? Wouldſt thou have Chriſt? Chriſt to juſtifie thee? Chriſt to ſanctifie thee? Chriſt to rule thee? Wouldſt thou be under Chriſts regiment, and live at his will? Come and welcome: no ſoul is excepted. *Whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* Ye ſee there is a *Quicunque vult*, Whoſoever will. Indeed if thou haſt not a will to be in Chriſt; but thou wilt do thus and thus, and thou wilt have thy will, and this luſt, and that friend, and ſuch a courſe, and

Rev. 22. 17.

and, *Tush, this is too strict*; nay, if you be there thou art not for Christ: I have nothing for thee but hell and damnation. But if thou wouldst have Christ indeed, and be in Christ indeed, thy heart in Christ, thy will in Christ, thy whole self in Christ; then arise, he calleth thee. Thus understand the word right, the gospel doth not exclude thee whosoever thou art.

3. Thou must not for fear of shame or losse, &c. keep from restitution wheresoever thou hast done wrong, or satisfaction wheresoever thou hast cozened, or reformation wheresoever thou art accustomed to any evil, or the doing any thing that may procure ease and quiet to thy conscience. It may be one is troubled in conscience for his wronging his neighbour in twentie pounds, and if he would make restitution he might have sound peace: but he will not; no, he daubeth up his conscience some other way. Another it may be suffereth disorders in his familie and foul abuses, which if he would redresse he might have peace: but he will

will not. Another, if he would down with his pride; another, if he would be acquainted with Gods ſervants, or if he would take any pains in good duties, be more diligent for the work of repentance, &c. but theſe things will not be done: Men plaiſter up their conſciences (I know not how) ſome other way, and ſo go to hell for not taking the right way. But if any of you be troubled in conſcience, keep back nothing, hold back nothing that may make for your true peace and quiet.

4. Thou muſt wait on God: Caſt thy ſelf at his feet, humbly deſire him to give thee the true peace of conſcience. But wait Gods leiſure, knowing thou haſt deſerved to be utterly deprived of it: and thus doing thou ſhalt find it to thy great comfort at laſt. *Bleſſed are all they that wait for him*; that is, when the Lord will be merciſull. He will do it with judgement; he will do it when it may do thee the moſt good, when it may bring himſelf moſt glorie: therefore it is fit thou ſhouldſt wait for his time of comforting. Now becauſe *Iſai.* 30. 18.

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many do misconstrue this waiting Gods leisure, (As for example, one is dead to all good duties, *O*, saith he, *I wait the Lords leisure till he quicken me: My heart is much hardned*, saith another; *but I wait the Lords leisure till he be pleased to soften it*. Thus men are lazie in the mean while; and yet they think they wait the Lords leisure. O beloved, this is not the waiting the Lord meaneth; this will not stay conscience; conscience is guiltie for all this waiting) therefore I beseech you consider what waiting I mean. 1. *Wait upon the Lord, and keep his way*; thou dost not wait else, unlesse thou keep praying, and striving, and meditating, and enquiring, and watching thine own heart lest it should slip aside. 2. Thou must wait as a servant waiteth upon his master: If his master calleth, he cometh; if he sendeth, he goeth; if he beckeneth, he taketh notice: So thou must wait. *As servants wait upon their masters, so our eyes wait upon the Lord till he have mercie upon us*. Be obedient in the mean time: go when he sendeth; come when

Psal. 123. 2.

he

he calleth; obſerve when he beckeneth; be diligent to be doing his pleaſure. 3. Thou muſt wait onely upon God, not upon thy luſts too, and upon other things too; but thou muſt wait onely upon God: *My ſoul, wait thou onely upon God,* ſaith David, Pſal. 62. 5. If thou wait upon any thing elſe, this is not to wait upon God. One waiteth a time to be revenged; another waiteth a time to ſatisfie this or that luſt: this is not to wait upon God at all. 4. Take heed of healing thy ſelf, and comforting thy ſelf, or daubing up thy conſcience thy ſelf: If thou doſt ſo, thou doſt not wait upon God to do it: If thou doſt it thy ſelf, and ſnatcheſt at comfort thy ſelf before he do give it, then thou doſt not wait till he give it. Suppoſe a man hath done thee an injurie; the Lord he will right thee if thou wilt wait: but if thou go and recompenſe evil for evil, and right thy ſelf, thou doſt not wait upon God, as Solomon adviſeth, *Say not thou, I will recompenſe evil; but wait on the Lord, and he will ſave thee.* Mark; Prov. 20. 22.

thou

thou must not save thy self, thine own credit, &c. by revenging, but wait on God for all. So here if thy conscience be troubled, thou must wait upon God to comfort it: If thou goest and daubest up the matter thy self, and criest, *Peace, peace*, to thy self, thou dost not wait upon God. Thus I have answered the last question, How if a man have a burdened and troubled conscience, what must such a man do to be freed from it? And hitherto we have spoken of the two last adjuncts of conscience, a Quiet conscience, and an Unquiet conscience; What they be, and, How they differ: and we have resolved and answered the questions and difficulties about them.

Conscience beareth witnesse of our persons.

CONcerning the witnesse of conscience, I told you that conscience beareth witnesse of two things: 1. It beareth witnesse of our actions; 2. It beareth witnesse of our persons. The former hath been declared unto you at large: I come now to the latter; Con-

science

ſcience beareth witneſſe alſo of our perſons, whether we be good or evil, whether in Chriſt or in ſinne: And here I will ſhew you foure things:

1. That every mans conſcience may inform him what ſtate he is in, whether of ſalvation or damnation, whether of grace or of nature.

2. How conſcience doth it.

3. When conſcience doth it.

4. How it cometh to paſſe then that ſo many thouſands miſtake and are ignorant and deluded about their eſtates.

I. For the firſt, That every mans conſcience may inform him what eſtate he is in, whether good or bad; (I ſpeak eſpecially of ſuch as live under the light of the Goſpel of Chriſt.) There are two rules: the one is Gods word, which pointeth out both eſtates; and the other is every mans conſcience, which is privy to the frame and ſtanding of every mans own heart, and which of theſe eſtates his eſtate is, conſcience is privy to this. I will inſtance in ſome ſorts of men. 1. The Jews, who contented themſelves with formality: they ſacri-

1. Everie mans conſcience may inform him in what ſtate he is.

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ficed, they offered, they payed their tithes, they did that which Moſes commanded them for the letter of it: now ye ſhall ſee their conſcience could tell them that they were not perfect nor upright with God: All their duties, and formalities, and gifts, and ſacrifices *could not make them that did the ſervice perfect, as perteining to the conſcience,* Heb. 9. 9. Mark; Their conſciences could ſay they were not upright for all this. As they were not upright, ſo their conſciences could tell them they were not upright. 2. Another inſtance we have in the Scribes and Phariſees: When they would have condemned the woman taken in adultery, their own conſcience was privy that they were ſinners themſelves, John 18. 9. So alſo it is with a child of God: His conſcience is able to inform him that he is a child of God, and that he doth truly ſerve God. *I thank God,* ſaith Paul, *whom I ſerve with a pure conſcience.* His conſcience told him he was a true ſervant of God, and that he was Gods: *whoſe I am,* ſaith he. So Davids conſcience;

2. *Tim.* 1. 3.

ſcience; *I am thine; ſave me: for I have ſought thy commandments.* So the church; *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* Ye ſee then how conſcience can inform and tell us what eſtate we are in, whether we be godly or carnall, whether our converſation be in heaven or on earth, whether we be in Chriſt or out of him. The ſpirit of man knoweth what is in him. It is eaſie to know what our great thoughts of heart are upon, what our greateſt purpoſes and projects and ſtudies be; whether about God or the world: the ſpirit of a man muſt needs know it: And therefore every man may draw out from conſcience a true concluſion how it is with him. The reaſons are theſe:

1. The firſt is taken from the nature of conſcience. The nature of conſcience is ſuch that it muſt needs be able to know what is with a man. Now his welldoings or his illdoings are with him: he was with himſelf when he did them. When thou art proud, or impatient, or careleſſe in any duty, thou art with thy ſelf when thou art ſo: All thy

illdoings are with thee: and therefore thy conscience must needs know what thou art. *Our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities we know them.* Take a curser; and, as Solomon saith, *Thine own heart knoweth that thou hast used to curse others.* So it is with a godly soul: Thine obedience is with thee, and thy self-deniall is with thee, and thy care to walk before God, all is with thee; and therefore thou must needs know it. This is the nature of conscience; It is privy to what is with one.

Isai. 59. 12.

Eccles 7. 22.

2. The second reason is taken from the equity of Gods judgements on the wicked. The Lord he will judge none to hell, but his conscience shall confesse he was one that walked in the way to hell and death. Ye may reade it in the man that had not on the wedding-garment: When Christ did charge him with his not having on a wedding-garment, and did condemn him to utter darknesse, the text saith, *he was speechlesse*; that is, his conscience confessed that Christs judgement was just: *I have not on a wedding-*

Matth. 22. 12.

ding-garment, ſaith his conſcience; *and it is my fault that I have none*; *and I am rightly condemned.* Thus his conſcience did know it; otherwiſe he could not have been ſpeechleſſe in his own defenſe. As Feſtus told Agrippa that he anſwered the Prieſts, *It is not the manner of the Romanes to deliver any man to dye before that he who is accuſed have his accuſers face to face, and have licence to anſwer for himſelf concerning the crime laid againſt him:* So may I ſay, that the great Judge of quick and dead will not judge any man to hell but he will have his accuſers face to face, and if he can anſwer for himſelf he may. Now if conſcience be not privy to what eſtate ſoever a wicked man is in, his conſcience could never accuſe him face to face at the laſt day, nor juſtifie the Lord Jeſus, and make the ſinner ſtand ſpeechleſſe before God. He might anſwer, *Lord, I do not know any ſuch thing as is laid to my charge: I am not convinced that the caſe is thus and thus with me, that I am in ſuch an eſtate as I am accuſed of.* No wicked man ſhall be able to ſay thus: Therefore conſcience

Acts 25. 16.

can inform a man in what estate he is.

3. The third reason is taken from the Lords manner of judging the godly. He will judge them and absolve them *secundùm allegata & probata*, as we say, according to the word and their own consciences. Ye may see the true form of judgement which the Lord will go by Matth. 25. Where the Lord convinceth the whole world who were righteous and who not, who to be judged to punishment and who to life for ever; at last he concludeth, *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternall.* As if he had said, *Your consciences can say ye are wicked: ye did not feed, nor clothe, nor visit me: Go your wayes to hell.* So for the righteous; *Your consciences can say ye are righteous: Go ye to heaven.* Thus the Lord will do. Now this could not be if conscience could not inform every one that is godly that he is so: If conscience could not witnesse what estate they are in, this could not be. Thus ye see the truth of the first thing.

II. The

II. The ſecond thing that I promiſed to ſhew you is, How conſcience doth this. Ye have heard that it is able to inform every one what eſtate he is in before God: Now it followeth to conſider, how conſcience doth it. This it doth by comparing the word of God with our hearts, and our hearts with the word: As for example; *They who have reſpect to all Gods commandments ſhall never be aſhamed*, ſaith the word: *But*, ſaith conſcience, *I deſire to know all my dutie to God and man, and to perform all that I know: and therefore I ſhall not be aſhamed. To him that ſoweth righteouſneſſe ſhall be a ſure reward*, ſaith the word: *But*, ſaith conſcience, *I plough up my nature and all the fallow-ground of my heart, and I ſow righteouſneſſe: and therefore to me ſhall be a ſure reward.* So, *To be ſpiritually minded is life and peace*, ſaith the word; *But*, ſaith conſcience, *I am ſpiritually minded; my mind is ſet upon things that are ſpirituall: therefore I have life and peace.* So conſcience alſo judgeth of the ſtate of ſinne. *Thoſe that live after the fleſh ſhall die*, ſaith the word:

2. How conſcience doth this.

Pſal. 119. 6.

Prov. 11. 18.

Rom. 8. 6.

word: *But*, saith conscience, *my life is led after the flesh and the lusts of it: there-*
Rom. 8. 13. *fore I shall die. He that believeth not is condemned already*, saith the word: *But*, saith conscience, *I do not believe: there-fore I am in the state of condemnation.*
John 3. 18 The word saith, *A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bring-eth forth corrupt fruit: But*, saith con-science, *My works and my courses are cor-rupt and naught: therefore so is my heart.* Thus ye see that conscience doth it by reasoning: And this conscience can ve-ry well do; 1. Because conscience hath a very good judgement. It is a very wise and judicious faculty in the soul of man. Some make it an act of judgement. We do not take it so: It is not an act of judgement, but it is a re-flexive faculty of the soul having a ve-ry good judgement. *Whether it be right to obey you rather then God, judge ye*, saith Peter, Acts 4. 19. appealing to their own consciences to judge in the point. So that conscience is a faculty of a good judgement. Now if it be judi-cious, it must needs be able to reason

and

and to argue about our eſtates, and find out whether they be good or no. It is the judgement of man that is able to argue, and able to hold an argument: *We thus judge*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *that if one died for all, then are all dead*, 2. Cor. 5. 14. Mark; His propoſition he would prove was, *That all the believers in Chriſt are dead to themſelves and alive unto God.* Now ye may ſee how his judgement maketh here an argument; *If Chriſt died for them all, then they are all dead: but Chriſt died for them all: therefore they are all dead.* Judgement is able to make arguments: and therefore if conſcience be a reflexive facultie that hath a very good judgement, it muſt needs be able to frame arguments, and ſo make out what our eſtates are. 2. Becauſe there is naturall logick in every mans conſcience: It can frame ſyllogiſmes, thus, *As many as be led by the ſpirit of God, are the ſonnes of God*, ſaith the word: *But*, ſaith a godly mans conſcience, *I am led by Gods ſpirit, and I am carefull to follow the leading of Gods holy ſpirit: therefore I am one of Gods ſonnes.*

And so on the other side. Ye will say, How can a countrey-mans conscience make syllogismes? It is onely for scholars and such as have studied logick in the schools to make syllogismes. I answer, It is true; Artificiall logick is onely among scholars. But there is naturall logick in conscience, which doth not stand upon forms. The godly people at Rome were never brought up at Universitie: yet the Apostle telleth them they had logick enough to argue themselves to be dead unto sinne and alive unto God through Christ; *Likewise also*, saith he, *reckon ye your selves to be dead indeed unto sinne, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The originall is, ἕτω λογίζεσθε, *Exercise so much logick in your selves; Like good logicians prove your selves to be dead unto sinne and alive to God.* So that ye see there is naturall logick in conscience: and therefore conscience is able to frame arguments about our estate, and to inform us what it is.

Rom.6 11.

3. When conscience doth this.

III. The third thing I propounded to consider is, When conscience doth this.

this. This is a very neceſſarie point: and indeed ſo they are all; but this more eſpecially. I have ſhewed that conſcience is able to inform us what eſtate we are in, whether of grace or nature: but when doth it perform this? I anſwer, I need not ſo much ſpeak of the godly, becauſe they do mark conſcience. But let me ſpeak of ſuch as are fooliſh, diſobedient, ſerving divers luſts, who never had yet the waſhing of regeneration nor the renewing of the holy Ghoſt: I anſwer about them; 1. Their conſcience muſt needs have a time when to do it. *I do remember my faults this day*, ſaith Pharaohs butler, Gen. 41. 9. His conſcience did inform him; and there was a time when his conſcience did inform him. 2. Conſcience would chooſe a time by it ſelf: it would inform a wicked man ſolemnly and punctually of his rotten and curſed eſtate he is in. I ſay, it would have a ſolemn time by it ſelf for this, if it could have it: but a wicked man taketh an order with his conſcience that it ſhall not tell him ſolemnly how it is

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with him; neither will he find a time to suffer it: As it was with Felix; When his conscience began to grumble against him, when Paul had told him of righteousnesse and of judgement, he trembled, his conscience began to stirre, and would then have solemnly dealt with him indeed: but he shuffled it off; and would not find time; *Go thy way at this time*, saith he to Paul; *I will heare thee at a more convenient time*. And so he said to his conscience too. Conscience would take a solemn and set time to inform men what their estates are; but men will not suffer them: and therefore conscience is fain to take such sudden times as it can get. Ye will ask, What times be they?

Acts 24. 25.

Conscience interlineth.

I answer, First, when conscience interlineth: As for example, in the hearing of the word: While men are hearing the word, it may be the preacher preacheth of holinesse, and a wicked man heareth it; *But I have it not*, saith his conscience. Mark; his conscience interlineth. It may be the preacher is preaching how desperately careless men

men are of their ſouls, how they look to every thing more then to them; conſcience interlineth, *This is my caſe.* It may be he is preaching againſt adulterie; *This ſinne I have committed*, ſaith a guiltie conſcience: or againſt ruſhing upon Gods ordinances without preparation; *This is my conſtant courſe*, ſaith an evil mans conſcience. It may be the preacher is preaching of converſion and becoming a new creature in Chriſt; *This I am yet to ſeek in*, ſaith conſcience. Thus conſcience interlineth: Though the man heareth on, and it may be taketh little to heart, yet conſcience interlineth a ſudden information of his wretched eſtate. Like a a bird that flieth by, or like a ſwift-ſhot arrow, that is preſently out of ſight, ſo it may be a man taketh very little notice of it. Like the forenamed Felix: as Paul was preaching of righteouſneſſe and temperance, *I have it not*, ſaith his conſcience; and of judgement to come, *What ſhall I do then?* ſaith his conſcience? Thus conſcience interlined, and made him tremble on a ſud-

Acts 24. 25.

den,

den, like a ſudden ſhivering of a col
or a ſudden ſtartle of a man affrighte
and away it was gone quickly. I be
ſeech you obſerve your own boſome
Do ye not feel this now and then at
ſermon, when ye heare it? do not you
conſciences interline our ſermons, an
put in parentheſes now and then
When ye heare ſuch and ſuch a ſinne
reproved, condemned, *And this is my ſinne*, ſaith conſcience: when ye heare
theſe and theſe graces commended, *And I never had theſe*, ſaith conſcience: when
ye heare theſe and theſe marks of a car-
nall eſtate, *And theſe or ſome of theſe are in me*, ſaith conſcience: do not your
conſciences interline in this manner?
As Paul was ſpeaking to the ſhip-men
concerning God, his conſcience did
Acts 27. 23. ſweetly interline thus, *There ſtood by me this night an Angel of God, whoſe I am*, ſaith his conſcience. And as he was
Rom 1. 9. writing to the Romanes, *God is my witneſſe*, ſaith he, *whom I ſerve in my ſpirit.*
But do not your conſciences interline
otherwiſe with you? If they do, I be-
ſeech you conſider it: Your conſcien-

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es do then truly inform you of your
otten eſtates: liſten to them.

Secondly, when conſcience falleth a choking. As for example, in prayer: a wicked man prayeth; *But I do not my right*, ſaith his conſcience. *I humbly eech thee, O Lord*: *Nay, but I do not eech humbly*, ſaith his conſcience. *I ire to be ſanctified and purged from my ins*: *Nay, but I do not hunger after any ch thing*, ſaith conſcience. *I do not con- ſs my ſins right, nor beg for grace right.* o your conſciences choke you thus? ow your conſciences inform you of our eſtates. Peradventure ye hardly ceive this choking at all: It is done a moment, and it preſently ceaſeth, cauſe ye are not willing to heare it: d therefore it may be conſcience doth by ſudden flaſhes. It is ſaid the Lord *ake ſuddenly* to Moſes: ſo often conſci- nce ſpeaketh ſuddenly to men, a word id away. As David ſaith of the wic- ed, *God ſhall ſhoot an arrow at them, and ey ſhall be wounded on a ſudden*: So con- cience ſhooteth a quick arrow, and it oundeth men in the twinkling of an eye,

Conſcience choketh.

Num. 12.4

eye, and it is gone. *Lord, have mer upon us*, ſaid one: *But I ſhould not ſay vainly and in ordinary talk*, ſaith conſcience. *I do not hate this man for his holineſſe and ſtrictneſſe: But you do*, ſaith conſcience. And ſo when men are defending evil by arguments; *But this falſe*, ſaith conſcience. Thus conſcienc choketh on a ſudden, and is gone. confeſſe, generally the men of the worl mark not theſe things: They are ſuch ſudden ſparklings of conſcience tha men for the moſt part do not hee them: But theſe are Gods witneſſes and men ſhall know one day they wer truly informed of their eſtates by thes inſtantaneous *Items* of conſcience.

Thirdly, when conſcience ſhooteth like a ſtitch in a mans ſide. As for example; Sometimes when men are abou their callings and their worldly buſi neſſe, then cometh conſcience like ſudden ſtitch in ones ſide, and giveth them a twitch, *O how wordly am I!* ſaith conſcience: *Shall I never get this worldly-mindedneſſe cured?* Many times conſcience ſpeaketh while men are work

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ing, or playing, or eating, or buying, or ſelling.

Fourthly, ſo likewiſe when conſcience commenteth upon the judgements of God. Let an adulterer fall ſick; *Yea, this is for mine adulterie*, ſaith conſcience. Let a company-keeper be in want of outward things; *Yea, this is my drunkenneſſe*, ſaith conſcience: *This is my wickedneſſe, my way, my doings which have procured me theſe things; this ague, this poverty, this ſhame, this diſcomfort.* Jer. 4. 18.

Thus I have ſhewed you how conſcience doth inform the wicked of their wretched eſtate; and, when it doth it. It remaineth now that I ſpeak ſomething of the fourth point.

4. Why many are deluded about their eſtate.

IV. How cometh it to paſſe then that ſo many thouſands miſtake, and are ignorant and deluded about their eſtates? The reaſon of this doubt is this; Seeing conſcience is able to inform every one what his eſtate is, whether it be bleſſed or curſed; and ſeeing alſo that conſcience doth it; and doth it by argument; and hath its time when it doth it: a man now would wonder that

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any should be ignorant of his estate when his own conscience doth tell him how it is with him. For answer I will explain unto you two things: 1. The reasons why men are mistaken; 2. The reasons why they are mistaken though conscience inform them.

First, They build upon false grounds which are not in Gods word. Some are so foolish that they build upon outward things, as health, peace, prosperitie, successe, and the like. They prosper, and all things go well with them, and therefore sure God is at peace with them: This is not so; but they think so though. Some again build upon grounds which men of corrupt minds do give them, or which they take from the common opinion of most, thinking that to be faith and repentance which the most take so to be, or which a teacher fit for their palate taketh so to be. On the contrarie side, weak Christians oftentimes mistake themselves by judging their estates to be bad because God letteth them be poor and mean and comfortlesse in the world:

world: Therefore they conclude God is angrie with them, or that they are not that which they ſeem to themſelves to be, becauſe they are ſo croſſed in all outward things. This is the firſt reaſon of errour in this kind.

2. A ſecond reaſon is the not-right underſtanding of Gods word: As when men judge of themſelves by ſuch places of Scripture as were not intended to be rules and to be of uſe to ſuch ends as they apply them: as, *Whoſoever calleth upon the Lord ſhall be ſaved*, Rom. 10. 13. Hence the wicked may falſely conclude, *I call upon the Lord, and I pray unto him; therefore I ſhall be ſaved.* And ſo on the contrarie, a weak Chriſtian who findeth not in himſelf thoſe degrees of grace which ſome places of Scripture ſeem to require concludeth from thence againſt himſelf, *Therefore I have no grace at all.* This is a ſecond cauſe of miſtaking. *Reaſ.* 2.

3. A third cauſe is the not trying and examining our own hearts. Some are loth to trouble themſelves about it: They are loth to think ſo bad of them- *Reaſ.* 3.

ſelves as that they are in ſuch a courſe as wherein God will not love them. Nay, they cannot endure that others ſhould diſcover their hearts unto them: They had as lieve they ſhould ſhew them the pit of hell as ſhew them themſelves. They look to ſome common gifts and graces that are in them, ſuch gifts and graces as may be in a reprobate, but they will not think ſo; as illumination, knowledge, the gift of prayer, of temperance, &c. Theſe they look to, and theſe they ſpeak of, though they have reigning luſts within in their hearts: As Jehu; *Come, ſee my zeal,* ſaith he, 2. Kings 10. 16. He doth not ſay, *Come, ſee my pride and hypocriſie;* but, *my zeal.* Jehu looked at his zeal, and ſo thought he was right. So on the contrarie, weak Chriſtians may ſometimes look onely at their ſinnes and infirmities, and take no notice of Gods graces that are in them, and ſo may miſtake their own ſelves, and conclude amiſſe of their eſtates. Thus I have ſhewed you the reaſons why men are miſtaken about their eſtates. Now I

will

will ſhew you the reaſons why men are miſtaken though conſcience do tell them.

1. Becauſe the ſpeeches of conſcience in the wicked many times, yea moſt times, are low ſpeeches. The gnawings of conſcience whereby they are told they are in a bad and a damned eſtate are like the gnawings of a very little worm that a man can hardly feel. *Where their worm dieth not:* The word in the originall, תולעה, ſignifieth a very little worm that breedeth in ſcarlet, that a man can very hardly ſee or perceive: ſo men ſometimes do hardly ſee or perceive the condemning and gnawing of conſcience. Again, conſcience biteth ſuddenly, as I told you; it giveth a little nip, and away: Like a ſparrow that flieth by; it flieth ſo faſt by a mans eye that he can ſcarce tell whether it be a ſparrow or no: So it is not eaſily perceived whether it be a condemning conſcience or no: it giveth ſuch ſudden nips, and away, that men ſeldome take notice. Beloved, there is never a wicked man under heaven, unleſſe *Iſa.* 66. 24.

leſſe he be delivered up abſolutely to a reprobate ſenſe, but hath a thouſand of theſe ſudden momentany nips every day in the yeare. Had he the heart to obſerve them: (but he hath not) he might ſee his wretched eſtate, to trouble him, and provoke him to Chriſt, and to be converted that God might heal him; I ſay, had he a heart he might ſee it: but theſe nips are ſo ſecret and ſudden that he doth not. So likewiſe it is with the godly in regard of true comfort: Their conſcience ſuddenly flaſheth in comfort, and they many times do not obſerve it. As Job ſpeaketh of God,

Job 9. 11. *Lo, he goeth by me, and I ſee him not: he paſſeth on alſo, and I perceive him not:* So doth the Lord go by his children in the ſudden flaſhes of comfort in their conſcience, but many times they ſee him not, perceive him not.

2. Becauſe the devil blindeth mens eyes, therefore they do not ſee what their conſciences do ſhew them. Ye may reade this of the wicked people in

2. Cor. 4. 2. Corinth: St Paul ſaith he *commended himſelf and the Goſpel to every mans conſcience*

ſcience in the ſight of God; that is, He did ſo preach, and ſo live, that every mans conſcience could not chooſe but ſay, *Certainly Paul preacheth the truth, and Paul liveth right, and we muſt live as he ſpeaketh and doeth.* He made their conſciences ſay thus, and to tell them they were not right if they did not. But mark what followeth: Some did not ſee this: Why? *The god of this world*, ſaith he, *hath blinded their eyes.* So the god of this world blindeth the eyes of the wicked that what their conſciences ſhew them they do not ſee it nor obſerve it. So for Gods people; Though they be in a good and a bleſſed eſtate, and their conſciences can ſay it, yet Satan oftentimes hindreth them that they do not perceive their own comfort.

3. Men do not love conſcience. We ſhould love conſcience better then the deareſt friend we have under heaven. We would do much for a friends ſake: but we ſhould do a thouſand times more for conſcience ſake: Obey Magiſtrates for conſcience ſake; ſuffer diſgrace, reproches, any thing, for con- *Rom.* 13.5.

science sake. It is better then all the friends in the world. But the wicked, they do not love conscience: let conscience speak, they care not to heare it. They will heare friends, but they will not heare conscience. Let their lusts call, and their profits and pleasures call for this and that thing, they heare all: but they love not to heare conscience. Nay, many wicked men are angry to heare talk of it. When Paul had made mention of conscience, Ananias com-
Acts 23.1. manded he should be smitten: *Men and brethren*, saith Paul, *I have lived in all good conscience before God untill this day. Smite him on the mouth*, saith the High Priest Ananias. He was angry to heare him talk of a good conscience. This is most certain; men do not love conscience, nor to be curbed by conscience, nor informed by conscience: They had as lieve see the devil as that their consciences should inform them of their estates, and tell them thus and thus they are. They are told rightly, and yet they are mistaken, because they do not love to heare conscience of that theme.

of

Of a good and bad conſcience.

YE have heard concerning the witneſſe-bearing of conſcience about our eſtates. The next thing to be ſpoken of is that welknown diſtinction of a Good and a Bad conſcience. This diſtinction we reade of in Scripture: Concerning a good conſcience ſee Heb. 13. 18. *We truſt we have a good conſcience.* Concerning a bad conſcience ſee Heb. 10. 22. *Having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience.* There be both the members. Of the diſtinction of them both briefly and in order; and firſt of a good conſcience.

Concerning a good conſcience

The goodneſſe of conſcience is twofold; naturall, and renewed. 1. The naturall goodneſſe of conſcience conſiſteth in thoſe reliques of goodneſſe which it reteineth ſince the creation. Ye know man depraved and corrupted his conſcience by his fall: yet there be ſome reliques left, as reaſon, and knowledge, and reflexion. I do not mean reliques of any ſpiritual goodneſſe in conſcience: For as there is no ſpirituall

goodneſſe left in the other faculties of the ſoul, ſo neither in conſcience. But the naturall goodneſſe which I mean is nothing elſe but the veracity of conſcience, whereby it is inforced according to the knowledge it hath to tell the truth. Thus every wicked man hath a good conſcience: Their conſcience is good in that ſenſe; their conſcience hath this naturall goodneſſe, that it telleth them the truth how it is with them. Nay, it is eſſentiall to conſcience to be good in this ſenſe. It is the eſſentiall property of conſcience to ſpeak according to its knowledge. It is the beſt faculty a wicked man hath: it is better then his mind, or heart, or will. There is more goodneſſe in a wicked mans conſcience then in any other of the powers of his ſoul: His conſcience ſpeaketh more for God then himſelf doth, and ſtandeth more for God then himſelf will. Not but that as all the powers of the ſoul are deſperately corrupted by ſinne, ſo conſcience is deſperately corrupted as well as any of them: but I ſpeak of the eſſentiall goodneſſe

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of it, which can never be loſt. The devils in hell have not loſt the goodneſſe of their eſſence: Nay, their eſſence is better then the eſſence of Gods Saints: their eſſence muſt be good becauſe that is Gods creature; nay, better then any mans eſſence, becauſe the Lord made them a degree above man. And as man is a degree above beaſts, ſo angels are a degree above man: ſo conſcience is a degree above other powers of the ſoul in its naturall goodneſſe. That conſcience hath ſuch a naturall goodneſſe in it, ſee it in thoſe curſed Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites, who brought the woman taken in adultery to Chriſt: Their conſcience was good; *they were convict-ed of their conſciences*: their conſciences dealt honeſtly with them, and told them the truth that they were wicked ſinners themſelves. This is the naturall goodneſſe in conſcience. John 8.9.

2. A renewed good conſcience. I call it a renewed good conſcience, becauſe when a man is renewed, all the man is renewed; all his mind and the ſpirit of it is renewed, Epheſ.4.23. *That*

ye may be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind. If the man be renewed, all the mind muſt be renewed; and therefore the conſcience muſt be renewed too; for the mind and the conſcience ever go together: nay, conſcience is mainly ſeated in the mind; and therefore if the mind be renewed, ſo is the conſcience; and if the mind be defiled, ſo is the conſcience. Tit. 1. 15. *To them that are defiled is nothing pure, but their minds and conſciences are defiled.* Mark; When they are defiled, they are defiled together: ſo when they are waſhed and renewed, they are waſhed and renewed together. Now this renewed conſcience is either perfect or defective. 1. Perfect. I mean not perfect in every degree of goodneſſe: For ſo no mans conſcience in the world is perfect: But I mean perfect in every part and condition of goodneſſe. 2. A defective good renewed conſcience is that which faileth in ſome conditions of goodneſſe. We call it a *weak* conſcience, which is apt to be polluted and defiled again. 1. Cor. 8. 7. *Their conſcience being weak is defiled.* This is a defective

ective good conſcience, a conſcience renewed, but imperfectly renewed.

I. To a good conſcience that is ſoundly renewed five things are neceſſary. A firm conſcience

1. Knowledge of Gods will, and that which doth follow the true knowledge of his will, namely true humiliation and fear. By nature the conſcience is blind and ſturdy and venturous; and therefore it is neceſſary that it ſhould be illightened to underſtand the will of God and to preſſe it: and again it is neceſſary that the heart ſhould be humbled, or elſe it will not ſtoop to Gods will: and it is neceſſary alſo that this holy fear ſhould fall upon the heart, that it may not dare to tranſgreſſe. St Peter being to ſpeak of a good conſcience, premiſeth all theſe as neceſſarie thereunto: Firſt he adviſeth that Chriſtians have *knowledge* to be able *to give a reaſon of the hope that is in them*; and then that they ſhould have *meekneſſe* and *fear*, for to do it: *with meekneſſe and fear*, ſaith he, *having a good conſcience*. Mark; Knowledge and meekneſſe and 1. Pet. 3. 15, 16.

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fear are required to make a good conscience; without them the conscience cannot be good. By nature we are all blind, and stubborn, and fearlesse of sinning: and therefore till we be cured of these evils, our consciences cannot be good.

2. The second thing is a watchfulnesse and warfare against sinne: This is required too to a renewed good conscience. By nature we are drowsie, and careless, and secure, and do not stand upon our guard to wage warre against our lusts and the desires of our flesh; and so long our consciences can never be good: and therefore this spirituall watchfulnesse and mainteining warre against sinne is required to the having a good conscience: *That thou maist warre a good warrefare*, saith Paul to Timothie, *having faith and a good conscience*, 1. Tim. 1. 18, 19. Some who seemed to have a good conscience, because they did not maintein this holy warfare against sinne and the flesh, they have lost it: Therefore this is another requisite required to a good conscience.

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3. The third is tenderneſſe of conſcience. By nature our hearts are ſeared, and dead, and unclean: and therefore we muſt get us tender and pure hearts if we would have good renewed conſciences. *The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart and good conſcience and faith unfeigned,* 1. Tim. 1. 5. See how the Apoſtle compoundeth them together, *a pure heart and a good conſcience.* We muſt get our hearts purged and quickened, that they may be ſenſible of the leaſt evil; and then our conſciences will be good and be as a bridle to hold us from evil. A hard heart and a good conſcience can never ſtand together.

4. The fourth is the cleanneſſe of conſcience by the waſhing of Chriſts bloud. This is the main and the principall of all: Yea indeed the bloud of Chriſt is the ſole and onely cauſe of a good conſcience. I would not be miſtaken: I named indeed other cauſes; Knowledge, and Humbling, and a holy Fear, a Combat againſt ſinne, and Tenderneſſe: but I do not mean as though

though a good conſcience were partly beholding to them and partly to Chriſts bloud: For it is wholly and onely beholding to Chriſts bloud for its goodneſſe; his bloud is the onely price of it. But my meaning is this, That though Chriſts bloud be the one onely cauſe of redemption, yet in the application of redemption the Lord uſeth all thoſe forenamed graces while he applieth it to the conſcience. Therefore this now I adde; The waſhing of Chriſts bloud, this is chiefly required to the goodneſſe of conſcience. We have two places of Scripture to prove it: The one, Heb. 9. 14. *How much more ſhall the bloud of Chriſt purge your conſciences from dead works?* It is that onely can do it. The other text is 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The anſwer of a good conſcience towards God by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.* Where the Apoſtle firſt giveth this title to a renewed conſcience, to be called *a good conſcience*: Secondly, he nameth the cauſe that maketh it to be good, the power of *Chriſts reſurrection*: When the reſurrection of Chriſt Jeſus is powerfull upon

upon us, then conſcience becometh good.

5. The fifth is quietneſſe. By nature nothing is ſo fierce and violent, if it be once awaked, as conſcience is: O it is unſpeakably furious. Thus is conſcience by nature: and therefore it can never be good untill we get it appeaſed with the aſſurance of the pardon of our ſinnes, and ſo true peace and comfort eſtabliſhed in it. This is the reaſon why the Scripture joyneth a good conſcience and faith ſo often together: as 1. Tim. 3. 9. *Holding the myſterie of faith in a pure conſcience.* It cannot be a pure or good conſcience if faith be not held in it. As long as the conſcience is not underpropped by faith, the conſcience muſt needs be in a wilderneſſe: *Perhaps my ſinnes are imputed unto me; perhaps they are pardoned: Perhaps they are covered, perhaps not.* As long as the conſcience lieth under theſe uncertainties, it cannot be firm and ſoundly good indeed: therefore we muſt labour for aſſurance of pardon by faith. Thus much of a good renewed conſcience that is per-

perfectly and soundly renewed.

An infirm conscience

II. Secondly, There is a good conscience renewed but not soundly renewed, very much as yet defective and imperfect. The former conscience is called *conscientia firma*, a firm conscience: This is called *conscientia infirma*, an infirm conscience. Rom. 15. 1. *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.* This infirm conscience is a good conscience too, and renewed, but cumbred with sundry imperfections; which in processe of time by growth in grace are, for the most part, conquered in the godly. True faith is required unto this: For the Apostle calleth such an one *a brother in Christ*, one that hath this infirm conscience: *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth.* And we must not set such an one at nought, *Tush, what care I for him? I know I may lawfully do thus: and this is my Christian liberty; and shall I lose it for him, because of his conscience?* Nay saith the Apostle, *Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?* Mark; The Apostle counteth such

Rom. 14. 21.

Rom. 14. 10.

ſuch an one a Chriſtian brother, and not to be ſet at nought: and therefore this is a good conſcience too, differing as much as white from black from ſuch conſciences as are weak through ſuperſtition of mind and through pride of heart becauſe they will not be otherwiſe, or through affected ignorance becauſe they love not to be better informed. Theſe weak conſciences are wicked; I ſpeak not of theſe: I ſpeak of a good conſcience, a conſcience renewed, but renewed imperfectly, having yet ſundry defects and imperfections. The imperfections of it are

1. Imperfection of knowledge. It doth not yet ſoundly and clearly underſtand what is lawfull and what is pure, and what is by Chriſtian liberty indifferent. Paul ſaith, *I know and am perſwaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of it ſelf: but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* Rom. 14. 14. He ſpeaketh of things that are indifferent: The Apoſtle had knowledge: but there were others who did not know this; *O I may not eat this meat; I*

may not play at bowls, or use any other recreation: I should sinne if I should, &c. This is one weakneſſe in this kind of conſcience, weakneſſe of knowledge.

2. The ſecond imperfection is to be grieved where it needeth not be grieved: As when it ſeeth other do that which it ſelf through miſtake doth judge to be evil, it is apt to be grieved and troubled to ſee it; *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkeſt thou not charitably.* It may be thou thinkeſt it lawfull to eat ſuch meat; but he thinketh otherwiſe, and ſo is grieved to ſee thee eat. This is another imperfection in this conſcience, to be grieved and offended without juſt cauſe.

Rom. 14. 15.

3. A third imperfection is in judgement: It is apt to judge and condemn another mans liberty: 1. Cor. 10. 29. *Why is my liberty judged of another mans conſcience?* He ſpeaketh of a weak conſcience. *It is apt to be judging and condemning my liberty,* ſaith he; *but why ſo?* This is a fault and an imperfection indeed; *O ſuch an one ſinneth, he doeth ſo and ſo:* yet it may be the thing is not

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unlawfull, but a weak conſcience is apt ſo to judge it, and to condemn him that doeth it. *Let not him that eateth deſpiſe him that eateth not: and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth*, Rom. 14. 3.

4. A fourth imperfection is this: A weak conſcience is apt to be misled. So the Apoſtle intimateth; *Take heed leſt by any means this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block unto them that are weak: for if any man ſee thee who haſt knowledge ſit at meat in the idoles temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weak be emboldned to eat thoſe things which are offered to idoles? and through thy knowledge ſhall thy weak brother periſh for whom Chriſt died?* Where ye ſee that weak conſciences are apt to be misled. The reaſon is this, Becauſe when they ſee others whom they know to be more learned and judicious then themſelves to do ſo and ſo, that may ſoon tempt them to do it though their conſcience be againſt it. 1. *Cor.* 8. 9, 10, 11.

The firſt uſe is this; If any have weak conſciences let them labour to *Uſe* 1.

ſtrengthen them. Ye ſee what imperfections are in a weak conſcience; how apt it is to be offended and to judge other mens liberty, how prone to miſleading: therefore let every good ſoul labour to be ſtrengthened.

2. The ſecond uſe is this; Thoſe that be ſtrong muſt be carefull that they offend not the weak. Though they do believe ſuch and ſuch Chriſtian liberties they have, yet if they know the uſe of them will offend their weak brother, they ſhould be carefull to abſtein. *Let no man put a ſtumbling-block or an occaſion to fall in his brothers way.* Rom. 14. 13.

3. Thirdly, if it be ſuch a ſinne to ſinne againſt the conſcience of the weak, then what a ſinne is it to ſinne againſt the conſcience of all that are godly, whether weak ones or ſtrong ones? Ye who walk after the fleſh, and can have diſorders in your families, and vanity in your mouths, and apparent corruptions in your lives; Ye who can drink and be drunken and keep company and prophane the Lords dayes; ye offend the conſciences of all that are godly: it is

a grief to their ſouls to ſee it. Let me tell you; It is a ſinne to be wicked however, and the high-way to hell: but to be wicked when ye have godly neighbours about you, your ſinne now is double: For as you offend God, ſo you offend them too. Ye may remember what Chriſt ſaith, *Whoſoever offendeth one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea*, Matth. 18. 6. Ah ye vile wretches! ye little imagine what fearfull vengeance ye pull on your own heads: It were better for you that a milſtone were hung about your necks, and ye thrown into the ſea, then that ye ſhould offend one of theſe little ones. Ye may call them what ye will; call them *puritanes*, *preciſians*, *uncharitable people*, *cenſurers*; ye may call them as Satan teacheth you to call them: but it is certain, it were better a milſtone were hung about your neck, and ye thrown into the ſea, then that ye ſhould offend any one of Chriſts little ones: The

Lord open your eyes that ye may repent and believe the gospel your selves and be saved.

4. Lastly, be exhorted, brethren, to labour after a good conscience. How excellent a thing is it that hath so many good ingredients! Illumination is one ingredient, and Faith is another, and Tenderneſſe another, and Pureneſſe another, and Quierneſſe another, and the Bloud of Jesus Christ another. It is like Aarons composition, which smelt sweetly when he went into the sanctuarie: It is compounded of excellent conditions, such as smell sweet when we come before God: the Lord loveth that such should come near him. We may come with assurance to speed if we come with a good conscience; *Let us draw near with assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.* Mark, we may draw near with assurance if we come with a good conscience. It will comfort us in all troubles, and support us in all dangers: It maketh us happie: nay, there is no happineſſe without it. It will

Heb. 10. 22.

make

make us with quietneſſe and contented-neſſe of ſpirit undergo whatever it ſhall pleaſe God to lay upon us. How can they want comfort that have this? It is a ſpring of comfort within them. This will remain with us when all other comforts will forſake us: When friends fail, and eſtate faileth, when credit and health and ſtrength and all fail, then a good conſcience, if we have it, will ſpeak peace to us, yea and it will effect it in us, comfort us, and faſten comfort upon us. Friends may ſpeak words of comfort and peace to us; but it may be we are not able to receive it: the miniſter may preach peace; but it may be we are not able to take it: But a good conſcience ſpeaketh peace and effecteth it; it doth not onely ſpeak it but it putteth it into our hearts. It proppeth us up in all miſeries, in ſickneſſes, yea in death it ſelf. A good conſcience then maketh us hold up our heads when all the world ſhall be confounded: A good conſcience will bear us out againſt the King of terrours: It is onely a good conſcience that can look death in the

1. Cor. 15. 55, 57. face, and say, *O death, where is thy sting? thanks be to God who giveth us victorie through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Yea, at the day of judgement, when the whole world shall be burning before us, when the great men of the world who go in silks and scarlet and broidred hair shall fear and shiver as a reed shaken with the wind, this will make us with boldnesse undergo the terrour of it. This will make us happie in all our distresses: When crosses pelt us, and sickneſse paineth us, and death attacheth us, we are happie men. What if we have the tokens of Gods wrath upon our bodies so we have the marks of his love upon our souls? What outward calamitie soever happeneth to us, yet if we have this good conscience we are happie. O then let us labour to get it by faith and a holy life. If we would be safe in the floud-time, in the day of Gods wrath, we must be busie now about the ark, we must provide beforehand for it: Nothing but this ark will save us in the deluge of Gods anger. It is in vain to trouble our selves about other things:

Jubal

Jubal was a merrie man; he made pipes and organes: Jabal built tents; others planted vineyards: but Noah provided his ark. Many deſire comfort in ſickneſſe, in death; but they do not provide for it beforehand: They look after their ſports or buſineſſes in the world; but this ark is neglected, this good conſcience, without which all mens labour is vain. Be they what they will be, in never ſo much credit and eſteem, they are yet moſt miſerable when troubles and afflictions come on them, as one day they ſhall and ſhall not tarrie; then all their comforts will forſake them: When death looketh them in the face, then their hearts die within them. How full of pride and haughtineſſe ſoever they were before, yet when they come to die, if their conſciences be awaked, they will with Saul fall down to heare the name of death, and no ſpirits be left in them. Nay, if we want a good conſcience when we lie on our deathbeds, & deſire good people to pray for us, *Good ſir, I beſeech you let me have the benefit of your prayers to God for me:* Alas, Gen. 4. 20. 1. Sam. 28. 20.

las, if thou haſt not a good conſcience, all the prayers under heaven will not help thee. See Heb. 13. 18. *Brethren, pray for us: for we truſt we have a good conſcience.* Mark; The Apoſtle teſteth them they may pray for him with comfort, becauſe he had a good conſcience. As if he had ſaid, *If we had not a good conſcience, it were in vain for you to pray for us.* If ever God heare the prayers made for us, we muſt have a good conſcience. Thoſe that have not this good conſcience ſhall never enter into the kingdome of heaven: Though they had Moſes, Daniel, and Job to pray for them, yet all their prayers could not help them in the time of their diſtreſſe.

The bond of conſcience.

NOw we muſt look back unto the foure propoſitions which at the beginning I obſerved in the text I am upon;

1. That there is in every man a conſcience.

2. That the light which directeth conſcience

conſcience is knowledge.

3. That the bond which bindeth conſcience is Gods law.

4. That the office of conſcience is to bear witneſſe, to accuſe or excuſe.

I have in the handling of theſe a little altered the method, and ſpake of the two firſt and the laſt. Now followeth the third, and that is conſciences bond, which is Gods law: *which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts*, &c. It is onely the work of Gods law that it beareth witneſſe of, that it accuſeth or excuſeth for: The law of God is conſciences bond. Nevertheleſſe we muſt here diſtinguiſh: The bonds of conſcience are either primarie & ſupreme, or ſecondarie and relative. The bond of conſcience is Gods law.

1. The primarie and ſupreme bond of conſcience is onely Gods word and law: that onely is the ſupreme bond of conſcience: *There is one law-giver, who is able to ſave or to deſtroy: who art thou that judgeſt another?* that is, There is but one ſupreme law-giver to bind the conſciences of men, and that is God. And the reaſon is given, Becauſe it is God *Jam.* 4.12.

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onely who is able to save and to destroy. As if he had said, God onely hath power over life and death, either to save a man for ever, or destroy a man for ever, and to judge a man according to all that he hath done: and therefore he onely can make laws to bind the consciences of men.

2. Now the secondarie or relative bond of conscience is, when others who have authoritie from God bind conscience to this or that. I call this a relative bond, because it is onely in relation to the authoritie of God. For though men cannot challenge any doings or omissions contrarie to their law to be sinnes, yet if they have authoritie from God to command any thing, then they become beams and parts of Gods law, and do by vertue of that bind a mans conscience.

This relative bond of conscience is twofold. First, other men may bind our consciences; as magistrates, and masters, and parents: who though they cannot bind conscience as they are men, yet when they have authoritie from

from God, their commands have Gods ſeals upon them, and do bind, I ſay, in relation to Gods law, which biddeth us obey them; Rom. 13.5. *Ye muſt needs be ſubject, not onely for wrath but alſo for conſcience ſake.* The Apoſtle there ſpeaketh of Magiſtrates; and he telleth us that their laws bind our conſciences in relation to Gods, and therefore we muſt be ſubject unto them for conſcience ſake. Thus others may bind our conſciences. Secondly, we our ſelves may bind our own conſciences; and that is by vows which we make unto God, or by our promiſes which we lawfully make unto men. The vows which we freely make unto God, theſe bind conſcience to keep them: Numb. 30.4. the vow of a woman is called *the bond wherewith ſhe hath bound her ſoul.* Mark; ſhe bindeth her ſoul and her conſcience with it. So the promiſes which we lawfully make unto men, theſe alſo bind conſcience: For though before we promiſe it was in our own power, yet when we have promiſed we have bound our own conſciences to the performance,

formance, because there is Gods seal upon it; Gods law commandeth us to be true of our words. These are relative bonds, bonds onely in relation to Gods law: Gods law is still the supreme bond of conscience. I will handle that first.

The law of God the prime bond of conscience.

I. The law of God whereby he willeth and commandeth and forbiddeth this or that in his word, this is the main bond of conscience: When this bindeth it, nothing else can loose it; and contrary, if this loose it, nothing else can bind it. It so bindeth conscience as the observing or violating of it is that which maketh conscience clear or guilty before God. This is it which maketh a man a debtour; *I am a debtour*, saith Paul, *both to the Grecians and to the Barbarians*: that is, I am bound in conscience by Gods command to preach the Gospel unto both. This is it that denominateth a man to be bound: *I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem*; that is, I knowing it to be Gods will am bound in conscience to go. This is that which layeth a necessity upon a man;

Rom. 1.14.

Acts 20. 22.

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A neceſsity is laid upon me to preach; i. I am bound in conſcience by Gods word ſo to do. This is that which layeth a kind of enforcement upon men; *We cannot but ſpeak the things which we have ſeen and heard*; that is, If we ſhould not, our conſciences would flie in our faces: We are bound by Gods will to do ſo, and our conſciences lay a charge upon us that we cannot go againſt it. The onely will and word of almighty God is that which ſupremely bindeth conſcience. 1. Cor. 9. 16. Acts 4.20.

1. Becauſe God onely knoweth the heart; he ſeeth our thoughts, and he onely can reach to the ſecrets of our ſpirits; and therefore he onely can bind our conſcience. For who elſe can tell whether we make conſcience of a thing yea or no? perhaps we do, perhaps we do not. Nor man nor angel can tell certainly: but God knoweth certainly, and he onely; and therefore he onely can bind our conſciences. When the Lord doth command or forbid, the conſcience is privy that God ſeeth it; and therefore now it is bound. *The word of* *Reaſons*

God

Heb.4.12. *God is quick and powerfull; it pierceth even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This bindeth a mans thoughts and intentions; he cannot be free in theſe things: and the reaſon is verſ.13. given by the Apoſtle; *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* As if he had ſaid, We are conſcious of Gods all-ſeeing power; he ſeeth our hearts and our thoughts and all that is in us: and therefore his word doth bind us, yea it bindeth all our ſecrets: we cannot think a vain thought but our conſcience will crie guiltie before God, becauſe our conſcience doth know that God knoweth all. Beſides, the conſcience cannot fear any law but onely Gods law. Ye know when conſcience is once in a doubt, it is fearfull, and beginneth to ask queſtions with it ſelf, *May I do this? or may I* 1.Cor.10. 27. *not do it? asking no queſtions for conſcience ſake.* The conſcience when it doubteth uſeth to ask queſtions. Now this ſuppoſeth the lawgiver to be able to ſee it: otherwiſe the conſcience would

would not be thus afraid, if it were onely the commandment of a creature, that could not ſearch the heart. So that here ye ſee one reaſon why Gods law is the ſupreme bond of conſcience; Becauſe no eye can ſee it but Gods.

2. Becauſe God onely hath power over conſcience: It is his commandment onely that maketh any thing ſinne or not ſinne unto us. Auguſtine defineth ſinne to be *A thought, or word, or deed, or luſt againſt the commandment of God.* *A-* Pſal. 51. 4.
gainſt thee, againſt thee onely have I ſinned, ſaith David. He ſaith he had ſinned onely againſt God. *Why?* you will ſay, *he ſinned alſo againſt man: Did not he commit adulterie? that was a ſin againſt Bathſheba: and murder? that was a ſin againſt Vriah.* True, he ſinned againſt man relatively, in relation to the commandment which ſaith, *Thou ſhalt not injure thy neighbour*: but primarily and principally the ſinne was againſt God. Conſcience is like the kings ſervant, whom none can arreſt or attach without leave from the king: ſo no man can bind conſcience without leave had from God:

for conſcience is onely ſubject to his power: he onely hath power over conſcience.

3. Becauſe conſcience is Gods book. Now no creature can adde to Gods book or diminiſh from it. Ye may remember that dreadfull anathema at the end of Gods book; *If any man ſhall adde to this book, God ſhall adde to him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man ſhall diminiſh from this book, God ſhall take away his part out of the book of life.* Now conſcience is alſo Gods book wherein his law is written. Nay, conſcience is called *Gods law*: For it is ſaid, that *when the Gentiles which have not the law do the things conteined in the law, they having not the law are a law unto themſelves*: that is, Their conſcience is Gods law unto them. Like as the Bible conteineth Gods law for us Chriſtians, ſo did their conſciences contein the law of God to them: yea, to us Chriſtians much rather: For we are not to let Gods law be written onely in our Bibles, but we muſt get it written in our conſciences: our conſciences are to be

Rev. 22. 18, 19.

Rom. 2.14.

Gods

Gods books wherein his laws are to be written. And therefore if it be a ſinne to adde a new law in the materiall book to bind men, then it muſt needs be a ſinne for any creature to put a new law into conſcience, which is the ſpirituall book of God. It is God onely who can write laws in this book: his book is above all the laws in the world; and none but God can put in and put out: and therefore none but he can bind conſcience. I ſpeak ſtill of this abſolute, & ſupreme bond of conſcience: For Magiſtrates may bind relatively; but not as they are their laws, but by the law of God before made. Thus ye ſee the neceſſity of this truth, That Gods law is the abſolute and ſupreme bond of conſcience.

Vſes.

1. This ſerveth to direct Miniſters how to convince the conſciences of their people. If Miniſters deſire to work upon their hearers, they muſt ſpeak to the conſcience; they muſt ſhew them Gods authority, that it is Gods *Vſe* 1.

will and Gods command. Tell conſcience never ſo much, that we ſhould do thus or thus upon other grounds and inducements, it ſtarteth not at that, except it be convinced by the word of God that it is Gods will, the commandment of the great God of heaven, the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh, who will look for our obedience: This maketh conſcience to ſtartle, this affecteth it and bindeth it. St Paul when he ſaid that
2. Cor. 4. 2. he *approved himſelf and his preaching to mens conſciences*, what followeth? *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that periſh*, &c. As if he had ſaid, This maketh all the world to ſtartle, except they be reprobates and men delivered over to Satan. It is eaſie to ſee what miniſterie affecteth moſt and doeth the moſt good in the hearts of the people, namely that which bringeth the cleareſt voice of Gods Spirit calling to obedience and binding the conſcience. They can heare with eaſe and great pleaſure the ſermons of thoſe whoſe doctrines are ſtuffed with humane diſcourſes. Learning and policie never pierce conſcience. Nay,

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let carnall preachers preach never ſo much againſt peoples ſinnes, they can make a ſport of it, though they heare their ſinnes with humane learning declaimed againſt. When the preacher doth not clearly preach the Lords voice, though he rip up ſinne, yet if it be not in the demonſtration of the Spirit of God, and ſhewing his clear authority, the heart will not be affected. Conſcience knoweth when it is bound, and when it is but dallied and jeſted with: And therefore if Miniſters deſire to have their miniſterie work upon the hearts of their people, they muſt ſhew them Gods authority, and confirm it by his word, and let them ſee that it is the commandment of the Lord, that which will one day judge them. *Let him know*, ſaith Paul, *that the things that I write are the commandments of the Lord.* It is the Lord of heaven and earth that biddeth thee yield, and commandeth thee to give over thy baſe luſts: It is he in whoſe hands thy breath is; thou hadſt beſt be obedient. I tell thee, thy conſcience obſerveth it; and if thou wilt 1. Cor. 14. 37.

not obey, it will rore like the roring of the ſea one day againſt thee, and ſting thee like a ſcorpion. The things that thou heareſt, know thou that they are the commandments of God: and if thou diſobey, thou doſt diſobey not men but God.

Vſe 2. 2. Is it ſo that the word of God onely is the ſupreme bond of conſcience? Then this teacheth us to have an eye to Gods word in that which we do, if we would ſatisfie conſcience. I ſay, have an eye to Gods word: not onely to do that which it may be is in Gods word; conſcience counteth that to be nothing: but to have an eye to Gods word. Conſcience will not be ſatisfied with any obedience that we do if we have not an eye to Gods word. Whatever we have an eye to beſides, conſcience knoweth it is nothing, if in all we have not an eye to the commandment of God: Though we do obey it, conſcience looketh upon it as if we did not obey it. It is onely Gods commandment and authority that bindeth conſcience: and therefore nothing ſatisfieth

fieth conſcience unleſſe we have an eye unto that. If we do not aim at Gods will in doing what we do, conſcience counteth our obedience as no obedience at all. As for example; Ye that are husbands, ye love your wives: but is it becauſe God commandeth it? It may be ye love them becauſe they love you, or becauſe your affections are to them: Alas, this is nothing: Pagans and reprobates can do ſo. But do ye aim at the doing of Gods will, who commandeth you? O ſay you, *The Lord doth command me, and I do it.* What of that? Do ye look at his commandment when ye do it? If not; be humbled, and know ye muſt get grace to do ſo, or ye are not obedient to God, neither will conſcience ſet it down for obedience. Ye that are ſervants, ye ſerve your maſters: but do ye aim at Gods will? thus, *O the Lord hath commanded me to be faithfull and painfull in my ſervice.* Doth your ſoul look to this? It may be ye ſerve them becauſe they are kind, and becauſe they pay you your wages, and the like: This is nothing to

conſcience: conſcience looketh at the commandment of God; and if your ſouls do not aim at the commandment of God, it wil not ſatisfie conſcience. Ye that are neighbours, it may be ye love one another, and be friends one with another: but doth your ſoul look at Gods commandment? is it becauſe God hath commanded us to love one another? People ſeldome aim at God in theſe caſes: They are friends with their neighbours: why? Their neighbours are friends with them. But they do not trouble their thoughts to aim at Gods commandment in it. Let me tell you; Conſcience will not count this obedience: For conſcience feeleth no bond but Gods word: and if ye do not look at that, it is no obedience with conſcience; conſcience will never acquit you or abſolve you for this; it accounteth of this obedience as no obedience at all. See 1. Cor. 10. 25. and ſo forward. There the Apoſtle handling that queſtion of conſcience, at laſt concludeth, *Whether ye eat or drink or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,*

God, verſ. 31. Let your hearts look at that, and aim at that; in whatſoever ye do ſtill look at God: all is loſt with conſcience elſe. Though ye eat never ſo ſoberly, and drink never ſo moderately, pray never ſo duly, conſcience counteth it all nothing if ye do not look at God: It is God onely & his word that doth bind it; and it will never give a diſcharge except your hearts look at him.

Vſe 3. 3. This ſerveth to confute our Antinomiſts, ſuch as ſay the law of God bindeth not the conſcience of the regenerate. Ye ſee here that the law of God bindeth the conſcience: and therefore if the regenerate have any conſcience at all, (as certainly they have the beſt conſcience of all men) then it muſt needs bind their conſcience. We confeſſe the conſcience of the regenerate is freed from many things by Chriſt. Firſt, it is freed from the yoke and bondage of the ceremoniall law, Gal. 5. 1. *Stand faſt in the libertie wherewith Chriſt hath made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage.* Everie mans conſcience is freed from that yoke of

From what Chriſtians are freed.

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the ceremoniall law, becauſe it ended in Chriſt. Secondly, the conſcience of the regenerate is freed from ſeeking juſtification by the deeds of the law. Indeed the firſt covenant was by the works of the law; *He that doeth them ſhall live in them:* But the ſecond covenant ſpeaketh better things; *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved.* It is true, if God had not ſent his Sonne, we muſt have ſought juſtification by the works of the law: Though it were impoſſible to find it by reaſon of our ſinnes, yet conſcience was bound that way. But now that Chriſt Jeſus hath ſealed up a new covenant in his own bloud, conſcience is freed from that former: Rom. 3.28. *Therefore we conclude, that a man is juſtified by faith without the deeds of the law.* For though juſtifying faith never be without the ſincere doing of the law, yet the deeds of the law have no influence into juſtification: Conſcience is freed from ſeeking juſtification thereby. Thirdly, the conſcience of the regenerate is freed from the rigour of the law. They are bound in conſcience to

uſe

uſe the law as a rule of their life, and in ſinceritie to obey it; but are not bound by the goſpel to the rigour of it: that they are freed from; and ſo they *are not under the law but under grace.* Rom.6.14. I grant that all carnall people, who are yet out of Chriſt, do all lie under the rigour of the law: and as long as they ſubmit not to Jeſus Chriſt, nor get into him, they are bound in conſcience to keep it, though they cannot: They cannot ſinne in one tittle, but conſcience will condemne them before God. They ſhall be condemned for every vain thought, for every idle word, for every the leaſt ſinne, for every the leaſt luſt, for any the leaſt omiſſion of good. They lie under the rigour of the law, and they are bound in conſcience to keep it, and they ſhall be countable for every tranſgreſſion, becauſe they are under the law. But the conſcience of the regenerate is free from this rigour, becauſe they are under grace, and therefore they are *delivered from the law:* Rom.7.6. The Lord hath delivered them by the body of Chriſt; and therefore they are not

bound

bound by the gospel to all that obedi-
ence that the law in rigour requireth.
Fourthly, the conscience of the rege-
nerate is freed from the curse of the
morall law. For though the law doth
condemn, yet their conscience needeth
not fear it, because they are in Christ:
Rom. 8. 1. *There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.* Indeed those
that are not regenerate, not ingraffed
into Christ, they are still in the mouth
of the gunshot: the law doth condemn
them, and they have no shelter, and
their conscience is bound by it; and
they shall find one day that by it their
conscience will condemne them to hell.
It may be now for the present their
conscience is quiet, and they choke it,
and so it letteth them alone: yet they
are condemned in conscience, and one
day they shall find it. But the regene-
rate are by Christ freed in conscience
from all this condemnation. Thus farre
we grant.

Antino-
mists. But the Antinomists and I know not
what Marcionites would have more.

They

They cannot abide to heare that a regenerate perſon is bound to any ſincere obedience to Gods law as the rule of their life: They crie out againſt the morall law as once the Babylonians did againſt Jeruſalem, *Down with it, down with it, even to the ground: O ye do not preach Chriſt if ye talk of the law.* Beloved, theſe are drunken opinions, fitter to be preached among drunkards and Epicures and monſters then among the peculiar ones of God. The law of God doth bind the conſcience of all the people of God, ſo that they are bound to make it a rule of life. Nay, the Scripture calleth it *Chriſts bond* whereby he bindeth his people to him: *The kings of the earth ſet themſelves, and the rulers take counſel together againſt the Lord and againſt his Anointed, ſaying, Let us break their bonds, and caſt away their cords from us. Tuſh, we will not be tied by his laws, nor be ſo preciſely ſtrait-laced with ſuch commandments as theſe.* Here the laws of the Lord are called *bonds* and *cords*: Gods people are bound to him by them: But the wicked they ſtand out

Pſal. 2. 1, 2, 3.

and

and refuse to be bound. Now if the law be called a *bond*, I pray what bond is it, but of conscience? It is not a bond like a prisoners fetters, to be put about their legs: This is a spirituall bond that bindeth the conscience. But let me prove it to you by arguments. There be sundrie arguments to prove it.

Arguments, That Gods law bindeth the conscience of the regenerate.

Arg. 1. *Luke* 17. 10.

First, That which hath power to say to the conscience of the regenerate, *This is thy dutie, and this must be done*, that bindeth the conscience: But the law of God hath power to say thus to the conscience, *This is your dutie.* Who can tell better then Christ? *When ye have done all these things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our dutie to do.* Mark; He speaketh of Gods law, *things commanded*: now the law is nothing else but a catalogue of those things that God hath commanded us. *When ye have done all these things*, saith our Saviour, *know it is your dutie.* Here ye see the law hath power to say to the conscience, *This is your dutie.* But ye will

will object, *We are under faith; and do ye tell us of law?* I anſwer, as Chryſoſtome anſwereth out of Paul, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: Yea, we eſtabliſh the law.* See how the Apoſtle doth abhorre this thought: *God forbid*, ſaith he. As if he had ſaid, *Farre be it from me to teach ſuch an abominable doctrine: No, no; we eſtabliſh the law.* Heare what Chriſt ſaith himſelf, *Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfill it.* O thought ſome, *If we believe in Chriſt, then we hope we ſhall have done with the law. No, no*, ſaith Chriſt; *ye ſhall as ſoon pull the heavens and the earth out of their place as diſannull one tittle of the law.* Rom. 3. 31.

Secondly, That which hath this authoritie that the breach of it is a ſinne, bindeth conſcience: but the law hath this authoritie, that neither regenerate nor unregenerate can tranſgreſſe it but they ſinne: therefore the law bindeth their conſciences. For the regenerate and all are bound in conſcience to take *Arg.* 2.

heed

1. *John* 3. 4. heed of ſinne: *Whoſoever committeth ſinne tranſgreſſeth alſo the law.* David was a regenerate man; yet when he had defiled Bathſheba, *I have ſinned,* ſaith he. Joſeph was a regenerate man; yet confeſſeth, if he ſhould tranſgreſſe the Lords commandment, he ſhould ſinne: *How ſhall I do this great wickedneſſe, and ſo ſinne againſt God?* But ye will object, This is old teſtament. What of that? I hope you will not take up the old damned hereſie again of the Cerdonians, and Cainites, and Apellites, and Manichees, and Severians, and other ſuch curſed hereticks condemned by the Church of God: Their hereſie was, To hedge out the regenerate from the old teſtament. And St Auguſtine proved it againſt them, That the morall law of God was ever the rule of obedience, and ſhall ſo continue with the goſpel to the end of the world; and every tranſgreſſion thereof is ſinne. The breach of the ceremoniall law was a ſinne once; but now it is not: becauſe once it bound the conſcience; now it doth not: But the breach of the morall law

law is ſtill ſinne: therefore ſtill it bindeth the conſcience. Do ye not remember what St James ſaith now under the Goſpel? he preſſeth it yet on mens conſciences: *He that ſaid, Do not commit adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now though thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a tranſgreſſour of the law.* Jam. 2. 11. And though ye may call it *a law of liberty* in what ſenſe ye pleaſe, yet he telleth you, Ye had beſt look to your words and deeds: for ye muſt be judged by this law of liberty: *So ſpeak ye and ſo do as they that ſhall be judged by the law of liberty.*

Thirdly, That which being obſerved doth cauſe the conſcience of the regenerate to excuſe, and being tranſgreſſed to accuſe, that bindeth their conſcience: (For what elſe do you make *binding* of conſcience but this?) But the law of God being obſerved doth cauſe the conſcience to excuſe; being tranſgreſſed, to accuſe; *In many things we ſinne all*, ſaith the Apoſtle. Mark; Our conſciences do accuſe us: as we do ſinne in many things, ſo our *Arg.* 3.

consciences do accuse us when we do so. *I am a sinfull man*, saith St Peter, Luke 5.8. His conscience did accuse him of sinne.

Arg. 4. Fourthly, That which is the condition of Gods covenant of grace bindeth the conscience, yea of the regenerate: but sincere obedience to Gods law is a condition of Gods covenant of grace. See Luke 1.72. *To remember his holy covenant, and the oath that he sware that he would give us, That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we might serve him without fear in holinesse and righteousnesse before him all the dayes of our life.* Mark; Sincere and universall obedience is a condition of the covenant of grace, not onely for a manifestation to our selves that we are truly justified; as these upstart patritians do hold: but it is the condition of the covenant of grace. Every covenant hath its conditions annexed; and therefore it is called *the book of the covenant*, Exod. 24.7. *the words of the covenant*, Exod. 34.28. *the tables of the covenant*, Deut. 9.11. The reason is this; Because when a covenant

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is made, the conditions are put into a book or a table and expreſſed in words. Onely here is the difference between the firſt covenant of works and the ſecond covenant of grace: Both have conditions; but here, I ſay, is the difference; In the one grace giveth the covenant, and grace giveth the condition of the covenant; but a condition is annexed though: Now hence we may argue, (and none but enemies to the Goſpel can denie it) If the covenant of grace do bind a mans conſcience, then certainly the condition of the covenant bindeth a mans conſcience too: But the covenant of grace bindeth the conſcience of the regenerate; and therefore the condition of it bindeth. If you ask, What is this to obedience? the anſwer is, That obedience is the condition of the covenant of grace, as the forenamed Scripture expreſſeth, Luke 1. 72. Thus ye ſee the law of God bindeth the conſcience of all the regenerate. This is the third uſe.

4. Hath the word of God ſupreme power to bind conſcience? Then hence *Uſe 4.*

we may learn, that no creature can dispense with it, nor free conscience from guilt when a man transgresseth the word. What a damned usurpation is it in the Pope to offer to dispense? The Canonists say he may dispense *de præceptis veteris & novi testamenti*. (They are their own words.) *he may dispense with the commandments of the old and new testament.* He dispensed with king Henry the eighth, and undertook to free his conscience from guilt though he married his own brothers wife. Gregorie the second undertook to free subjects from being bound in their consciences to keep their oathes of allegeance to Leo the Emperour. O these are damned aspirings; and they plainly declare him to be Antichrist, who exalteth himself in this manner. The word of God is the supreme binder of conscience: And therefore not all the Angels in heaven can dispense with one idle word. *For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.* Gods word is settled for ever in heaven, and therefore ye may assoon remove the heaven from its place as

Azorius the Jesuite reports it.

Psal. 119. 89.

one

one tittle of the word from binding conſcience. Doth the word ſay thus or thus? thou hadſt beſt do it: If thou wilt not, all the whole world cannot help thee; thy conſcience will condemne thee at the day of judgement without remedie. Hath the word convinced thee of thy ſinnes, and made thy conſcience ſay, *I am a ſinner, and am guiltie before God?* I tell thee then, Thy conſcience is bound, and all the world cannot looſe it. But haſt thou been humbled and emptied of thy ſelf, and doth the word pronounce pardon of thy ſinnes in Chriſts name, that thy conſcience can ſay, *The Lord ſpeaketh peace to my ſoul?* I tell thee, Thou art looſed, and nor hell nor devil nor ſinne nor fleſh nor any thing can bind thee. Ye may ſee the power of Gods word in that ſpeech of our Saviour, *Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth ſhall be bound in heaven*, Matth. 18. 18. That is, My word which ye preach is of that nature, that if that looſe your conſcience, it is looſed indeed, and nothing can bind it; if that do bind it, it is bound ſoundly

indeed, and nothing can looſe it. O this is a terrour to the wicked! Doth the word of God ſay, *He that hardneth his neck, being often rebuked, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and cannot be cured?* O fear and tremble ye that harden your necks againſt the reproofs of the Almightie: his word bindeth over your conſciences to Chriſts barre. Doth the word ſay, *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge?* If thou beeſt ſuch an one, thy conſcience is bound with this word, and it will apply it to the ſoul before the tribunal-ſeat of Chriſt. Doth the word crie out againſt any of thy courſes? thy conſcience is bound as with chains, and it is not all thy vain hopes and excuſes can looſe thee. Again, this is comfort to the godly: Gods word is the ſupreme binder of conſcience. O ye bleſſed of the Lord, the word of God tieth ſuch a faſt knot to your comforts that all hell cannot open it with their teeth: The word of the Lord Jeſus is with you, *who hath the key of David, that openeth and no man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth and no*

Prov. 29. 1.

man

man openeth. Yea, but ſayeſt thou, *My ſinnes are againſt me:* What then? mark what the word ſaith, *We have an Advocate with the Father:* Thy conſcience is bound to believe that. *Yea, but I have a very naughtie heart, and I cannot tell what to do with it:* Mark what the word ſaith, *Believe in the Lord Jeſus, and thou ſhalt be ſaved:* This bindeth thy conſcience. *But I offend dayly:* Mark ſtill what the word ſaith; *Chriſt bringeth in everlaſting righteouſneſſe.* If thou beeſt unworthy to day, there is righteouſneſſe for thee to day; if unworthy to morrow, there is righteouſneſſe for thee to morrow; if unworthy for ever, there is righteouſneſſe for thee for ever. This is Gods word, and thy portion; this bindeth thy conſcience to lay hold on it. *But I have abundantly ſinned:* What ſaith Chriſts word? *I will abundantly pardon.* O what comfort is this to every poore ſoul which the Lord Jeſus hath humbled! His word is the ſupreme binder of conſcience, above the law, above juſtice, above threatnings, above all the world beſides.

Dan.9.24.

sides. His promising word is the supreme binder of thy conscience, if thou beest one of Christs: And therefore fear not; onely believe, and be thankfull, and give glory to God. This is the childrens bread; no stranger can intermeddle with it.

The secondary bond of conscience.

YE have heard that the bonds of conscience are of two sorts: First, there is a supreme bond of conscience, and that is Gods word: of which I have already spoken. Secondly, there is a relative bond of conscience, which bindeth conscience indeed, but it is onely in relation to Gods word, because Gods word putteth authority upon it. And this latter is also of two sorts: 1. Others may bind conscience; 2. We our selves may bind our own consciences.

1. Others may bind our consciences.

1. Others may bind our consciences, namely, when they have authority conferred upon them from God, & so their laws and commands receive vigour and force

force from Gods laws. Thus the laws and commands of Magiſtrates bind the conſcience of People; of Parents bind the conſcience of Children; of Maſters bind the conſcience of Servants: For though they do not bind conſcience as they are the commandments of men, yet having Gods ſeal and authority upon them they do. I will ſet down ſome concluſions whereby ye may know how farre the laws and commandments of others bind or not bind conſcience.

1. *Concluſion.*

1. Magiſtrates have power to command us. *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God*, Rom. 13. 1. That chapter doth moſt clearly prove this concluſion unto us.

Out of the firſt part of the chapter we learn, 1. That Magiſtrates have power and authority to make laws, and to eſtabliſh orders among men; and therefore they are called *powers*: 2. We learn that theſe laws of Magiſtrates receive

ceive ſtrength and force from the law of God: *For the powers that be are ordained of God*, ſaith the text. 3. Thoſe laws made by the Magiſtrate and confirmed by God have power to bind conſcience, verſ. 5. *Wherefore we muſt be ſubject not onely becauſe of wrath but alſo for conſcience ſake.* And the violating of them is ſinne. When their authority is confirmed by God, we cannot *reſiſt them* but we *reſiſt the ordinance of God*, ſaith the Apoſtle: nay, we may *pull condemnation upon us* if we do; *They that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves condemnation*, verſ. 2. So that this firſt concluſion telleth us what laws of men are to be obeyed; *viz.* 1. Such as do virtually flow from Gods word, though not expreſſely commanded in it; 2. Such as are good and wholeſome and profitable for the common-wealth: Theſe though they are not particularly commanded in Gods word, yet are they by virtue of it injoyned: and therefore to neglect them and be diſobedient unto them, is to neglect and be diſobedient to God. Again, ſo farre onely are they

hey to be obeyed (ſo farre onely, I ſay) s they virtually do flow from Gods word: for ſo farre onely they receive orce from Gods law. This is the firſt concluſion.

2. *Concluſion.*

2. The commandments of Magiſtrates and thoſe that are in authoritie loſe their power of binding the conſcience in foure caſes:

1. When they command that which though in it ſelf it be not ſimply and abſolutely ſinfull and unlawfull, yet it doth put us upon a neceſſity of ſinning: As for example, If a Magiſtrate command ſingle life to all Miniſters, this thing is not in it ſelf ſimply unlawfull, (for it is lawfull to marry, and it is lawfull not to marry) yet this commandment is unlawfull, becauſe it would put Miniſters upon a neceſſity of ſinning: The reaſon is, becauſe all have not this power. And therefore ſuch a commandment as this would not bind conſcience: For the conſcience cannot be bound to impurity, or an apparent danger

ger of impurity: and therefore though the thing be not simply unlawfull, ye the commandment is simply unlawfull, and doth not bind conscience. The Apostle maketh such a commandment to argue a seared conscience in the commander: and therefore none but a seared conscience can think it is bound by it, 1. Tim. 4. 2, 3.

2. The commandments of Magistrates lose their power of binding the conscience when they command things that are unlawfull in themselves and contrary to the word of God. In this case they do not bind conscience, because Gods seal is not on them. We have an example of this in the three blessed children; Who when the king commanded them to worship the image that he had set up, they did not conceive themselves bound in conscience to obey: they would rather suffer torment then obey it. So also Daniel, when he was commanded not to ask any petition of God for thirty dayes space, but onely of the king, Daniel did not conceive himself bound in conscience,

Dan. 3. 16.

ence,

nce, nay he choſe rather to be caſt in- *Dan.6.16.*
o the den of lions then obey. In this aſe the anſwer of the Apoſtles is neeſſarie; who when they were commanded not to preach any more in the ame of the Lord Jeſus, thus they anſwered, *Whether it be right in the ſight f God to obey men rather then God, judge ye.*

3. When mens laws and commands overthrow the libertie of Chriſtianitie, hat Chriſtian libertie which Chriſt ath purchaſed for us, then they loſe heir power of binding the conſcience. But here I muſt tell you of a caution; *viz.* That this libertie may be conſidered in a double reſpect: 1. In regard of it ſelf, the libertie it ſelf; 2. In regard of the exerciſe or uſe of this libertie. Now there is a very great difference between theſe two conſiderations; as there is a great difference between a mans having a ſword and a mans wearing a ſword. The Magiſtrate may reſtrain a man from wearing a ſword at ſuch or ſuch a time, though he do not take his ſword from him: ſo

there

there is difference between the having our libertie and the uſing our libertie. There is a libertie purchaſed for Gods children, whereby all things are become lawfull unto them: *All things are lawfull unto me,* ſaith Paul 1. Cor. 6. 12. *and there is nothing evil in it ſelf* (he ſpeaketh of indifferent things.) Gods children are freed from the obſervation of meats, and drinks, and times, and garments. Now whatſoever commandment is made by the Magiſtrate contrarie to this libertie doth not bind conſcience: for nothing can bind conſcience when Chriſt doth looſe it: Yet there may be a reſtraint of the uſe of this libertie: as for example, the Magiſtrate may command us to forbear ſome kinds of meats at ſome certain times; and ſo alſo for garments, and the like: namely, when the doctrine about meats and drinks and garments is pure. And therefore in ſuch a caſe the command of the Magiſtrate bindeth the conſcience; otherwiſe not.

Rom. 14. 14.

4. When they command things indifferent to be abſolutely neceſſarie, to

make

make them idolatrous or ſuperſtitious, then in this caſe they are unlawfull and bind not the conſcience to obey them. But when are they idolatrous? I anſwer; 1. When they are commanded either as abſolutely neceſſarie to Chriſtianitie, to the very being of religion and the worſhip of God, and with as much neceſſitie as holineſſe it ſelf, then they are made ſuperſtitious and idolatrous: And in this caſe the caveat of St John is ſtrongly to be kept, *Babes, keep your ſelves from idoles.* 2. When they are commanded as things meritorious, as pleaſing to God for themſelves, and to merit of him, then they are idolatrous. 3. When they are commanded for the ſubſtantiall perfection of religion, as though religion were imperfect without them, then they are made idolatrous, and loſe their virtue of binding the conſcience. But all ſuch commands of things that are indifferent, which are commanded without reſpect to make them idolatrous, they may be obeyed. This is our ſecond concluſion. 1. *John* 5. 21.

3. *Con-*

3. Concluſion.

3. Thoſe laws and commandments of Magiſtrates which want the authoritie of Gods law to confirm them (and therefore bind not the conſcience) ought not to be diſobeyed for all that with ſcandal or contempt and by unreverent ſlighting or deſpiſing the Magiſtrate or his laws. He muſt be acknowledged a Magiſtrate under God for all that: 1. Tim. 2. 1, 2. *I exhort that ſupplications be made for Kings and thoſe that are in authoritie.* He ſpeaketh there of heathen Kings; yet he calleth them *Kings*, and ſaith they *have authoritie*; and we ought to pray for them: and therefore how much more when Kings, and Magiſtrates ſubſcribe to Chriſtian religion? Nay, though they command that which is utterly unlawfull, we muſt not riſe up againſt them: for if we do, we riſe up againſt God. We muſt obey them one way or other, either actively or paſſively: When they command that which is lawfull for us to do, we muſt obey them by doing: when they command that which is unlawfull

lawfull for us to do, & threaten puniſh-ment, then we cannot actively obey them by doing, becauſe they command againſt God; yet we muſt paſſively obey by ſuffering and ſubmitting to their penalties, becauſe the Lord hath given them authority over us. This is our third concluſion.

4. *Concluſion.*

4. Thoſe laws of Magiſtrates which by Gods law do not bind conſcience, do yet in matter of ſcandal bind us to obedience. If the Magiſtrate ſhall command any thing beyond his power to command yet not unlawfull for us to do, though ſuch a command do not bind to obedience in caſe of conſcience, yet in caſe of ſcandal it doth. Thus Chriſt was content to pay tribute though he needed not to have done it: *The children*, ſaith he, *are free*: neverthelesſe, leſt he ſhould offend the Magiſtrate, he did pay it. I will put an example of another nature: In a private wrong, though we are not expreſſely bound to it, yet rather then ſcandalouſly to contend, conſcience *Matth. 17. 27.*

doth bind us to yield. Needed Abraham to have condescended so farre unto Lot as to let him take his choice before him? No, rather then scandal of religion should arise, ye may reade that he did it. Thus I have briefly made it manifest how farre the commands of the Magistrate do not bind conscience, and how farre they do.

Objections.

Obj. 1. 1. But it may be objected; Conscience hath onely relation to God.

Answ. I answer, It is true, as the supreme and absolute binder of conscience: but it hath a relation also unto men in the second place, inasmuch as God puteth upon men such terms as conscience hath relation to, Acts 24.16. *Herein I have alwayes endevoured my self, to have alwayes a clear conscience both towards God and towards men.* Mark; Conscience hath relation to both: For though it have its main relation to God and his word, yet in him it hath relation unto men.

Obj. 2. 2. Again it may be replied; The Magistrates

Magiſtrates do not undertake, nor can they, to meddle with mens inviſible ſpirits; for they are not able to ſee whether the ſpirit of man be obedient or no: and therefore how do their laws bind us in conſcience. The Magiſtrate onely looketh at the bodie: mens thoughts and affections and conſciences are naked onely to God.

Anſw. It is true, the Magiſtrate doth not undertake but onely to bind the outward man: nevertheleſſe the conſcience of the ſubject feeleth it ſelf to be bound to obedience under pain of ſinning againſt God, who giveth this generall precept, *Submit your ſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lords ſake, to the King*, &c. 1. Pet. 2. 13. The conſcience feeleth this, and ſo it cometh to be bound.

Obj. 3. 3. Again it may be replied; The conſcience is not bound but onely by way of religion. If I make conſcience of a thing, then I make a matter of religion of it: but what religion is there in the commandments of Magiſtrates? ſuppoſe the Magiſtrate commandeth us to get our armour in readineſſe, to

mend our high-wayes, to moderate expenſes at nuptials, or the like; theſe are civil things and not religious, and therefore how can they bind conſcience? We make conſcience onely of religion and the worſhip of God.

Anſw. Such laws do not bind conſcience under the name of religion, but under the name of civil diſcipline. And again, though they do not bind conſcience *per ſe* and immediately, yet they do *per aliud* and as ſubjoyned to an higher law. For though the breach of ſuch laws be onely a civil fault in it ſelf, yet in another reſpect it may be a morall ſinne, if the powers that are ordained of God be neglected and diſobeyed. And therefore though the conſcience do not regard civil laws as they are civil; neither do we make conſcience of them as they are civil: yet as they are made by the miniſter of God, & backed by his authoritie which the Lord hath ſet on them, ſo they do take hold of conſcience; and not to perform them is contrarie to juſtice and charitie and the profit & ſafetie of the commonwealth, and ſo a ſinne.

Vſes.

Vſes.

1. This confuteth the Anabaptiſts, who denie that any obedience is to be given to the ſecular power. Ye ſee here that the laws of Magiſtrates have Gods ſeal upon them; and therefore we muſt yield obedience unto them: for they bind in conſcience. Again, this confuteth the Papiſts, who teach that their Popes laws and commandments are of ſupreme authoritie, and require equall ſubmiſſion of ſpirit with Gods laws: and alſo that the omiſſion of them is death and damnation. Our doctrine and religion goeth between both: For we teach that Gods authoritie is onely ſupreme, and that he onely can make laws under pain of death and damnation; and that the authoritie of Magiſtrates is ſecondarie, and ſecondarie obedience is to be given unto them. The Papiſts ſpeak blaſphemie in ſaying their Pope can make laws under pain of damnation to be kept: Our Saviour Chriſt maketh this a propertie onely of God; *Fear not him that can kill* *Vſe 1.*

kill the bodie, and there is all that he can do: but fear him who can cast both bodie and soul into hell: I say unto you, Fear him, Luke 12.4. As if he had said, Men can reach no further then the bodie, and their punishments can go no further then the death of the bodie.

Vse 2. 2. This teacheth us what to do if men should command any thing which is unlawfull for us to perform: (Suppose there should be any such humane commands as are repugnant to Gods.) In this case ye see we must obey God rather then men; nay, suffer losse of goods, losse of libertie, yea losse of life, rather then obey the commandments of men in case they be contrarie to the commandments of God. Ye may reade a lamentable example in Ephraim; They were utterly destroyed for obeying their King rather then their God: The King commanded to worship the calves, and to go unto Bethel & not to Jerusalem to worship: they yielded to his commandment, and did so; O thought they, *We shall displease the King if we do not.* For this sinne of

theirs

theirs they were broken in judgement, Hoſ. 5. 11. *Ephraim is deſtroyed and broken in judgement, becauſe he willingly walked after the commandment.* Beloved, Gods commandment is ſovereigne, and the ſupreme binder of conſcience: Whatever commandment is repugnant to Gods word, wo to us if we do it; nay, though it be to ſave our goods or our lives. It is true, we muſt *give to Ceſar the things that are Ceſars*; but ſo as withall we muſt be ſure to *give to God the things that are Gods.*

3. This comforteth Gods people againſt the calumnies and ſlanders of wicked and ungodly men that upbraid them for their obedience to God. O ſay they, *Ye are irregular and deſpiſers of authoritie.* I ſay, this is comfort to the godly, that God is able to bear them out in obeying him rather then men. Gods word is the ſupreme binder of conſcience; and therefore, whatever men think of ſuch, they are abſolutely bound to obey God. If men command us againſt the word of God, we know their authoritie is the ordinance *Vſe 3.*

of God; and therefore if they go beyond that, they do not bind us in conſcience. If God had not bound us in conſcience to him, others might have taken it ill if we ſhould not obey them: but now what cauſe have others to think ill of us? What folly were it in us to ſeek to pleaſe men and to diſpleaſe God? If we were at libertie, then we might chooſe whom we would obey: but now we are bound unto God, and muſt be obedient unto God, whatever men command to the contrarie, let us do it therefore with chearfulneſſe. By this we ſhew our ſubmiſſion to God; by this we ſatisfie conſcience, which being bound unto God doth continually urge us to obey him. Why ſhould we omit part of the exactneſſe of our obedience which the word of God doth require? We have more to do then ever we ſhall be able to perform: we ſhould therefore be carefull to do all that we may. By our obedience to God in this kind we convince the conſcience of others of our uprightneſſe towards God: Though

through

through the overruling dominion of their luſts and paſſions they rage at us, and their mouthes ſpeak evil of us, yet we may have an evidence in their conſciences within which may teſtifie for us: their conſciences will whiſper within them, *Surely they do well to pleaſe God rather then men:* their conſciences will be on our ſide, though their actions and tongues be againſt us. We have a notable example of this Acts 4. 15, 16. When the rulers of the Jews had threatned the Apoſtles, and had reviled them with many bitter words, and had bidden them go aſide for a while, then they concluded among themſelves, *Surely an evident ſigne is done by them, and we cannot deny it:* So that their conſciences acquitted them for good men. So when the wicked of this world have ſpoken evil of the wayes of the righteous, and blaſphemed the holy name after which they are named; yet when they are alone, and their conſciences at counſel within themſelves, then they conclude, *Indeed they do well.* Thus their conſciences give a good evidence

evidence of us, and accuse them for not doing the like. And thus much shall suffice to be spoken of other mens binding of conscience.

II. *We may bind our own consciences.*

II. We our selves may bind our own consciences: And that is by those vows and promises which we make to God of any thing lawfull and in our power. Those vows and promises which we make unto God according to the warrant of his word they do bind our conscience. They are our own before we have made them: as Ananias and Sapphira their gift was their own before they vowed it to the church; *While it remained was it not thine own? and when it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* Acts 5.4. We need not vow unlesse we will: but after we have vowed our vows are Gods bonds, and do bind the conscience to the performance of them. Nay, we *lie unto God*, as the text saith they did, if we do not stand to the performance of them.

But it may be demanded, What vows

vows are they which are unlawfull, and do not bind conſcience? I anſwer;

1. Such as we make of things impoſſible and beyond our power: Theſe are unlawfull, and do not bind conſcience.

2. Such as we make of things unlawfull; when we vow to do that which is contrarie to Gods law: ſuch as Davids was when he vowed the deſtruction of Nabals familie: This doth not bind conſcience: nay, we are bound in conſcience to break it. 1. Sam. 25. 22.

3. Such as though they be of things lawfull and poſſible, yet we want freedome in the performance of them: as for a wife or a ſervant or a child to make a vow, when their relation to ſuch as are over them will not ſuffer them to perform it: This bindeth not conſcience. Nothing bindeth conſcience but that which hath Gods ſeal upon it: but this hath not Gods ſeal on it; and therefore it doth not bind conſcience: indeed it bindeth us in conſcience to repent of it. Numb. 30. 3.

4. Such

4. Such as though they be lawfull and profitable and in our own freedome, yet if there fall a greater consequence before the time of performance, we are not bound in conscience to perform them: as if a man upon the receit of some mercie should in testimonie of his thankfulnesse vow a hundred pounds to good uses, in the mean time his estate so decayeth as that he shall undo himself and his familie if he perform it; this is so great a consequence, and contingently hapned, that it freeth his conscience from performing what he had vowed: Or if a man should promise marriage to a woman, and before the time of nuptials she be found unchast; this is a farre greater consequence, and he is not bound in conscience to marry her. These kinds of vows do not bind in conscience: But all other do bind us.

1. *Vse*; We may learn from hence never to vow but with good judgement and counsel. For either we must keep our promise, or not: If we must, that is a signe it is good, and therefore had

had need of deliberation: If we muſt not keep it, then it is a ſigne of raſhneſſe and inconſiderateneſſe; and beſides it may prove ſcandalous and offenſive to them to whom we make it, and alſo to them that ſhall heare of it: And therefore it requireth good judgement and adviſe to vow. What a raſh vow was that of good Jephthah? *If thou wilt deliver Ammon into my hand, whatſoever meeteth me I will offer it for a burnt-offering.* How if a dog had firſt met him? what a ſin had it been? How if his daughter? what a thing had that been? And indeed it proved to be his daughter. Vows without judgement do but increaſe our ſinnes and aggravate our tranſgreſſions againſt God. *Judges* 11. 30.

2. *Vſe*; This teacheth us to keep our good vows whatſoever they be that we make. Indeed it is hard to keep a good, yea it is hard to make a good vow in that manner as we ſhould: It requireth a great deal of faith and ſelfdeniall and humilitie and ſtrength of reſolution: But when we have made it, our ſinne is the greater if we do not

then

Eccles 5.5 then keep it; *Better it is not to vow then that thou ſhouldſt vow and not pay. Haſt thou vowed a vow? then deferre not to pay it: God hath no pleaſure in fools.* As if the holy Ghoſt had ſaid, *It is the part of a fool to vow before he conſider and be abſolutely reſolved to perform, to be off and on with the Lord God of hoſts: The Lord hath no pleaſure in fools: Therefore pay all thy good vows, and be humbled for thy raſh vows.* But we are fallen into bad times, when truth and equitie is periſhed from among men: Every one is a deceitfull bow; yea, the beſt (almoſt) is a briar: Nothing ſo common as vows and promiſes; but few make conſcience of performing them. Nay, men are careleſſe of their grand vow which they have made unto God in Baptiſme. their baptiſme. O this is a very fearfull ſinne! Ye have all made a vow unto God in your baptiſme that ye would live otherwiſe then ye do, and ye make no conſcience to keep it. Baptiſme is a very weightie thing: If there were no other thing to bind you to holineſſe and obedience and faith but onely the vow

ye

ye entred into in your baptiſme, did ye conſider what a vow it is, it would move you alone. It is ſaid of Apollos that he was *fervent in ſpirit* though he *knew nothing but the baptiſme of John:* Apollos conſidered what a vow he had made unto God in his baptiſme, that, though he knew nothing elſe, it made him zealous for God. Baptiſme is a very great binder of conſcience: It bindeth a man to believe, and to go out of himſelf, and to ſubmit to Jeſus Chriſt. The wicked Phariſees ſaw this to be true: *If we ſhall ſay that Johns baptiſme was from heaven, he will ſay, Why did ye not then believe?* Beloved, was not your baptiſme from heaven? was it not an ordinance of God? and did ye not ſolemnly then vow unto God? Why then do ye not believe? why do ye not denie your ſelves, your works, your wayes, and take up Chriſts croſſe? As Chriſt ſaith of John Baptiſt, *Among them that are born of women there hath not been a greater then John the Baptiſt*; ſo may I ſay of bonds and of vows and covenants, Among all the

Acts 18. 25.

Matth. 21. 25.

Matth. 11. 11.

vows

vows and covenants that ever were made there hath not been a greater then this of Baptiſme: And therefore ye had beſt look to the performing of what ye then vowed: If ye do not, ye are grievous breakers of covenant with God; which ſinne will ſurely ſtand againſt you for evil. It is moſt certain, that Baptiſme doth greatly bind us in conſcience to walk anſwerably to it in all righteouſneſſe and true holineſſe: And we can never be ſaved (though we are baptized) except we can anſwer with a good conſcience that we live as we vowed in our Baptiſme: 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The like figure whereunto, even Baptiſme, doth alſo now ſave us; not the putting away of the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God.* Mark; Unleſſe we can anſwer with a good conſcience that we live according to our promiſes in it, our Baptiſme cannot ſave us. I pray, conſider that ſpeech of St Paul; *We are buried with Chriſt by baptiſme into his death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo*

Rom. 6. 4.

ſo ſhould walk in newneſſe of life. Mark; There is the vow that we made unto God in our Baptiſme: And the Apoſtle there telleth us we are bound in conſcience to keep this vow; otherwiſe we had better have been without our Baptiſme. Do not think that God will be mocked: Ye are content to go for Chriſtians: but if ye be Chriſtians, conſider ye are under a great vow; and if ye do not keep it, Gods covenant hath a quarrel againſt you, and ye ſhall be broken in judgement. There is no ſinne that ye live in, no luſt that your conſcience telleth you hath entertainment in your hearts, but it is ſacramentall perjurie againſt the vow that ye made unto God in your Baptiſme. Are ye dead to good duties? Ye vowed in your Baptiſme ye would not be ſo. Do ye not dayly mortifie and ſubdue your affections? Ye vowed in your baptiſme ye would. Do ye not dayly fight againſt ſinne and the fleſh, like the faithfull ſouldiers of Chriſt? Ye vowed in your Baptiſme ye would. What a horrible perjurie is

this? Nay, it is worse: it is a sacramentall perjurie. When the Apostles saw any sinne in the people, presently they tell them of Baptisme: as if they should say, *Do ye live thus and thus, when ye vowed the contrarie in your Baptisme?* When there were divisions in Corinth; Some would be of Cephas, and some of Apollos, and some of Paul: Paul then telleth them of their Baptisme; 1.Cor.1.13. *Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* As if he had said, *I pray, consider how contrary this is unto your Baptisme: Ye were baptized into Christ; and are ye thus divided among your selves?* So when there was corruption crept into the people of Galatia, St Paul telleth them Gal.3.27. of their Baptisme: *As many of you,* saith he, *as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* As if he had said, *This corruption of yours is contrarie to your baptisme: Ye were baptized into Christ, & ye have vowed to put on Christ; & do ye yield to such corruptions as these?* So also when there was want of love and unitie and affection between one another among the Ephesians, St Paul telleth

telleth them of their Baptiſme: O ſaith he, *There is one God, one faith, one baptiſme.* As if he ſhould ſay, *This is contrarie to your baptiſme: Ye were all baptized with one baptiſme; and do not ye live in peace? and is there not unitie of ſpirit one with another among you? What? and were all baptized with one baptiſme?* Beloved, ye never do that which is not good but ye go clean contrarie to your Baptiſme. What? were ye baptized into Chriſt, and do thus? baptized into Chriſt and pray thus? baptized into Chriſt, and heare the word of Chriſt thus? ſerve God no better then thus? Your Baptiſme bindeth you in conſcience againſt every ſinne and every evil way: O let us take it to heart and conſider it. Ephes. 4. 5.

FINIS.

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R. Brownrig, Procan.